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THE
CHRISTIAN MONITOR.
—
NO. X.
—
CONTAINING
**MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEM-
PLATIONS;**
SELECTED AND ABRIDGED
FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE LEARNED AND PIous
BISHOP HALL.
—
BY THE CHRISTIAN MONITOR SOCIETY.

C

PREFATORY REMARKS

BY THE EDITORS.

We trust that the spirit of this work has already been evident from preceding numbers. Avoiding whatever might tend to awaken the temper of theological controversy, or kindle the flame of fanaticism, it has been our principal aim to build up our fellow christians in faith and holiness, and to provoke one another to love and good works.

Accordingly, when the Christian Monitor has consisted of the labours of others instead of our own, we have endeavoured to compose it of works, which have been apparently produced under the influence of a pious, tolerant, and christian spirit.

Such a spirit, we believe, was, in a good degree, manifest in the life and writings of Joseph Hall, D.D. successively bishop of Exeter and Norwich, who was born, 1574, in Leicester, Eng., and who died in 1656. His life was long and variegated, the subject sometimes of honour and sometimes of reproach, and not a little embittered by the fury of persecution. He inherited from nature great fertility of imagination and a discriminating judgment, which were happily cultivated by assiduous and painful study. Such were the vivacity of his thoughts, the originality of his manner, and the elegance of his diction, that he was called the English Seneca. His excellence seems to have consisted in deriving moral and religious instruction from the historical parts of the sacred writings. His contemplations have been given to the world in a variety of forms. They are too voluminous to come within the reach of christians in general. An octavo abridgment of them was made by Mr. Blackwell in 1796; yet even this is a scarce book. We have thought it would add to the variety and value of our work, if we enabled its readers to form some acquaintance with the labours of this most worthy man. They will accept, therefore, a specimen of

them in the selections contained in the following pages. His language, in some instances antiquated and unintelligible, has been altered* for what may be more easily comprehended ; and we have meant to extract such of his meditations, as savoured most of the simplicity of the gospel, and least of the temper of a polemical sect. But even here our care has not been excessive or nice. Pretending to no dominion over the faith of our brethren, we strive only to be monitors of their duty and helpers of their joy. May the blessing of heaven rest upon our endeavours, and upon the endeavours of all those, who with upright views and benevolent hearts seek for the dissemination of christian truth and the growth of christian virtue !

Boston, Apr. 15, 1809.

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MEDITATIONS, &c.

DIVINE AND MORAL,

Serving for direction in christian and civil practice.

1. AS there is a foolish wisdom, so there is a wise ignorance, in not prying into God's ark ; not inquiring into things not revealed. I would fain know all that I need, and all that I may : I leave the secret things of God to himself. It is happy for me that God makes me of his court, though not of his counsel.

2. I will neither be content with that measure of grace I have, nor impatient of God's delay ; but every day I will endeavour to have one drop added ; so my last day shall fill my vessel to the brim.

3. However the mind, in her natural faculties, follows the temperature of the body, yet in moral things she quite crosses it ; for with the

coldest complexion of age, is joined, in those that are truly religious, the ferventest zeal and affection to good things ; which is, therefore, the more reverenced and better acknowledged, because it cannot be ascribed to the warm spirits of youth. I will strive to be always good : but if I should not find myself best at the last, I should fear I was never good.

4. I see God is not like man ; but in whatever he promises he approves himself most faithful, both in his ability and performances. I will, therefore, ever trust God on his bare word ; even with hope, besides hope, above hope, against hope ; and for time to come I will rely on him for small matters of this life ; for how shall I hope to trust him for things that seem impossible, if I do not in things that are likely ? How shall I depend on him for raising my body from dust, and saving my soul, if I distrust him for a crust of bread towards my preservation ?

5. I will use my friend as Moses did his rod ; while it was a rod, he held it familiarly in his hand ; when it became a serpent, he ran away from it.

6. An ambitious man is the greatest of all enemies to himself ; for he still torments himself with hopes, and desires, and cares ; which he might avoid, if he would remit of the height of

his thoughts, and live quietly. My only ambition shall be to rest in God's favour on earth, and be a saint in heaven.

7. There was never a good thing easily obtained. The heathen man could say, God sells knowledge for sweat ; and so he does honour for jeopardy. Never any man hath acquired either wealth or learning with ease ; therefore the greatest good must needs be the most difficult. If men can endure such cutting and searing of their bodies, to protract a miserable life yet a little longer, what pain should I refuse for eternity ?

8. Then only is the church most happy, when truth and peace kiss each other ; and then miserable, when either of them balk the way, or when they meet and kiss not. For truth without peace is turbulent ; and peace without truth is secure injustice. Though I love peace well, yet I love main truths better ; and though I love all truths well, yet I had rather conceal a small truth than disturb a common peace.

9. The world teaches me, that it is madness to leave behind me those goods that I may carry with me : Christianity teaches me, that what I charitably give alive, I carry with me dead : and experience teaches me, that what I leave behind I lose. I will carry that treasure with me by giving it, which the world loses by keeping it ;

so, while his lips shall carry nothing but a winding cloth to the grave, I shall be richer under the earth than I was above it.

10. Every worldling is a hypocrite ; for while his face naturally looks upward to heaven, his heart grovels beneath on the earth ; yet if I would admit of any discord in the inward and outward parts, I would have an heart that should look up to heaven in an holy contemplation of the things above, and a countenance cast down to the earth in humiliation. This is the only dissimulation pleasing to God.

11. As Christ was both a lamb and a lion, so is every christian ; a lamb, for patience in suffering and innocency of life ; a lion, for boldness in his innocence. I would so order my courage and mildness, that I may be neither lion-like in my conversation, nor pusillanimous in the defence of a good cause.

12. He was never a good man that amends not ; for, if he were good, he must needs desire to be better. Holiness is so sweet, that whoever tastes of it must needs long after more ; and if he desire it, he will endeavour after it ; and if he do but endeavour, God will crown him with success. God's family admits no dwarfs. Whatever become of my body or my estate, I will ever labour to find somewhat added to the stature of my soul.

13. When the mouth prays, man hears ; when the heart, God hears : every good prayer knocks at heaven for a blessing ; but an importunate prayer pierces it and makes way for itself into the ears of the Almighty. And as it ascends lightly up, carried by the wings of faith, so it comes ever laden down again upon our heads. In my prayers, my thoughts shall not be guided by my words, but my words shall follow my thoughts.

14. Earth affords no sound contentment. For what is there under heaven not troublesome, besides that which is called pleasure ? and that, in the end, I find most irksome of all other. My soul shall ever look upward for joy, and downward for penitence.

15. God is with me, ever before me. I know he cannot but oversee me always, though my eyes be holden that I see him not. Yea, he is still within me, though I feel him not ; neither is there any moment that I can live without God. Why do I not, therefore, always live with him ? Why do I not account all hours lost, wherein I enjoy him not ?

16. There is no man so happy as the christian. When he looks up to heaven, he thinks, that is my home : the God, that made it and owns it, is my father ; the angels, more glorious in nature than myself, are my attendants ; mine ene-

mies are my vassals. Yea, those things that are most terrible to the wicked, are most pleasant to him. When he hears God's thunder above his head, he thinks, this is the voice of my father. When he remembers the tribunal of the last judgment, he considers, it is my Saviour that sits in it. When death approaches, he esteems it but as an angel set before paradise, which, with one blow, admits him into eternal joy. And, which is most of all, nothing in earth or hell can make him miserable. There is nothing in the world worth envying, but a christian.

17. The substance of every virtue is in the heart ; which, since it has not a window made into it by its Creator, but is reserved under lock and key for his own view, I will judge only by appearance. I had rather wrong myself by credulity, than others by unjust censures and suspicions.

18. There is none like to Luther's three masters ; prayer, temptation, meditation. Temptation stirs up holy meditation ; meditation prepares to prayer, and prayer makes profit of temptation, and brings divine knowledge from heaven. Of others I may learn the theory of divinity ; of these, only the practice. Other masters teach me by rote to speak, parrot-like, of heavenly things ; these alone, with feeling and understanding.

19. Sudden extremity is a notable trial of faith, or any other disposition of the soul. For as in a sudden fear the blood gathers to the heart, for guarding that part which is principal ; so the powers of the soul combine themselves in a hard exigence, that they may be easily judged of. The faithful, more suddenly than any casualty, can lift up his heart to his stay in heaven ; whereas the worldling stands amazed at the evil, because he has no refuge to which he can fly. When, therefore, some sudden pain attacks me, like to be the messenger of death ; or when the sword of my enemy, in an unexpected assault, threatens my body, I will seriously note how I am affected ; so the suddenest evil, as it shall not come unlooked for, shall not go away unthought of. If I find myself courageous and heavenly-minded, I will rejoice in the truth of God's grace in me ; if dejected and heartless, herein I will acknowledge cause of humiliation, and with all care and earnestness, seek to store myself against the dangers to come.

20. Every man has his turn of sorrow ; some more, some less, whereby all men are in their times miserable. I never yet could meet with a man that complained not of somewhat. Before sorrow come, I will prepare for it : when it is come, I will welcome it : when it goes, I will take

but half a farewell of it ; as still expecting his return.

21. Many vegetable, and many brute creatures, exceed man in length of age. This fact opened the mouths of heathen philosophers to accuse nature as a step-mother to man ; who hath given *him* the least time to live, that only can make use of time in getting knowledge. But herein religion doth most magnify God in his wisdom and justice ; teaching us, that other creatures live long and perish, only man recompences the shortness of his life with eternity after it ; that the sooner he dies well, the sooner he comes to perfection of knowledge, which he might in vain seek below : the sooner he dies ill, the less hurt he does with his knowledge. There is good reason then why man should live long ; greater, why he should die early. I will never blame God for making me too soon happy, for changing my ignorance for knowledge, my corruption for immortality, my infirmities for perfection. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

22. It is unwise to get goods to keep them ; I see that God, who only is infinitely rich, holds nothing in his own hands, but gives all to his creatures. But, if we will lay up, where should we rather repose it than in Christ's treasury ? The poor man's hand is the treasury of Christ. All my

superfluities shall be there hoarded up, where I know they shall be safely kept, and surely returned to me.

23. No worldly pleasure has any absolute delight in it : but as a bee, having honey in the mouth, has a sting in the tail. Why am I so foolish, to rest my heart upon any of them ? And not rather labour to aspire to that one absolute good, in whom is nothing savouring of grief, nothing wanting to perfect happiness.

24. Extremity distinguishes friends : worldly pleasures, like physicians, give us over when once we lie dying ; and yet the death-bed has most need of comforts.

25. In suffering evil, to look to secondary causes, without respect to the highest, makes us impatient. For so we bite at the stone, and neglect him that threw it. If we take a blow from our equal, we return it with usury : if of a prince, we repine not. What matter is it if God kill me, whether he do it by an ague, or by the hand of a tyrant ? Again, in expectation of good, to look to the first cause, without care of the second, argues idleness and causes want. As we cannot help ourselves without God, so God will not ordinarily help us without ourselves. In both, I will look up to God, without repining at the means in one, or trusting them in the other.

26. If my money were another man's, I could but keep it: only the expending shows it my own. It is greater glory, comfort, and gain, to lay it out well, than to keep it safely. God has made me not his treasurer, but his steward.

27. I will enjoy all things in God, and God in all things; nothing in itself: so shall my joys neither change nor perish. For however the things themselves may alter or fade; yet he, in whom they are mine, is ever like himself, constant and everlasting.

28. As nothing makes so strong and mortal hostility as discord in religion: so nothing in the world unites men's hearts so firmly as the bond of faith. For, whereas there are three grounds of friendship---virtue, pleasure, profit; and by all confessions, that is the surest which is upon virtue: it must needs follow, that what is grounded on the best and most heavenly virtue, must be the firmest: which, as it unites man to God so inseparably, that no temptations, no sufferings can sever him; so it unites one christian to another so firmly, that no outward occurrences, no imperfections in the party loved can dissolve them. If I love not the child of God for his own sake, for his Father's sake, more than my friend for my own advantage, or my kinsman for blood, I never received any spark of true heavenly love.

29. Grief for things past, that cannot be remedied, and care for things to come, that cannot be prevented, may easily hurt, can never benefit me. I will therefore commit myself to God in both, and enjoy the present.

30. The loss of my friend, as it shall moderately grieve me, so it shall another way much benefit me, in recompence of his want: for it shall make me think more of him, and seriously of earth and of heaven. Of earth, for his body which is reposed in it; of heaven, for his soul which possesses it before me: of earth, to put me in mind of my like frailty and mortality: of heaven, to make me desire, and, after a sort, to emulate his happiness and glory.

31. God never brings any man from the estate of sin to the estate of glory, but through the estate of holiness; and as for a holy life, he seldom brings a man from gross wickedness to any eminence of perfection in religion. I will be charitably jealous of those men, which, from notorious wickedness, leap at once into a sudden forwardness of profession. Holiness does not, like Jonah's gourd, grow up in a night. I like it better to go on soft and sure, than, for an hasty fit to run myself out of wind, and after stand still and breathe myself.

32. A faithful man has three eyes ; the first of sense, common to him with brute creatures ; the second of reason, common to all men ; the third of faith, proper to his profession : whereof, each looks beyond the other, and none of them intermeddles with other's objects. For neither does the eye of sense reach to intelligible things and matters of discourse : nor the eye of reason to those things which are supernatural and spiritual : neither does faith look down to things that may be sensibly seen. If you discourse to a beast of the depths of philosophy ever so plainly, he understands not, because they are beyond the view of his eye, which is only of sense. If to a mere sensual man of divine things, he perceives not the things of God : neither indeed can he, because they are spiritually discerned. And therefore no wonder if those things seem unlikely, incredible, impossible to him, which the faithful man, having a proportionable means of apprehension, sees as plainly as his eye does any sensible object. The deepest philosopher that ever was, being destitute of the eye of faith, is but an ignorant sot to the simplest christian. For the weakest christian may, by plain information, see somewhat into the greatest mysteries of nature, because he has the eye of reason common with the best : but the best philosopher, by all the demonstration in the world,

can conceive nothing of the mysteries of godliness, because he utterly wants the eye of faith. Though my insight into the matters of the world be so shallow, that my simplicity moves pity, or makes sport to others ; it shall be my contentment and happiness, that I see farther into better matters. That which I see not is worthless to me, and deserves little better than contempt : that which I see is unspeakable, inestimable, for comfort, for glory.

33. Christ raised three dead men to life : one newly departed, another on the bier, a third putrid in the grave, to show us that no degree of death is so desperate, that it is past help. My sins are many and great : yet if they were more, they are far below the mercy of him that hath remitted them, and the value of his ransom that hath paid for them. A man hurts himself most by presumption ; but we cannot do greater wrong than to despair of forgiveness. It is a double injury to God ; first, that we offend his justice by sinning ; then, that we wrong his mercy by despairing.

34. No sorrow shall make me wish myself dead, that I may not be at all ; no contentment shall hinder me from wishing myself with Christ, that I may be happier.

35. A man need not care for more knowledge, than to know himself ; he needs no more pleasure, than to content himself ; no more victory, than to overcome himself ; no more riches, than to enjoy himself. What fools are they that seek to know all other things, and are strangers in themselves ? that seek altogether to satisfy other men's humours with their own displeasure ; that seek to vanquish kingdoms and countries, when they are not masters of themselves ; that have no hold of their own hearts, yet seek to be possessed of all other commodities. Go home to thyself first, vain heart ; and when thou hast made sure work there, in knowing, contenting, overcoming, enjoying thyself, spend all the superfluity of thy time and labour upon others.

36. There is nothing more easy than to say divinity by rote ; and to discourse of spiritual matters from the tongue or pen of others ; but to hear God speak it to the soul, and to feel the power of religion in ourselves, and to express it out of the truth of experience within, is both rare and hard.

37. As all natural bodies are raised, so must be all our moral dispositions : no simple passion does well. If our joy be not allayed with sorrow, it is madness ; if our sorrow be not tempered with some mixture of joy, it is desperate : if in these

earthly things, we hope without all doubt, or fear without all hope, we offend on both sides ; if we labour without all recreation, we grow dull and heartless ; if we sport ourselves without all labour, we grow wild and unprofitable. These compositions are wholesome, as for the body, so for the mind ; which, though it be not of a compounded substance as the body, yet has much variety of qualities and affections, and those contrary to each other.

38. Joy and sorrow are concealed with difficulty ; as from the countenance, so from the tongue ; there is so much correspondence betwixt the heart and the tongue, that they will move at once ; every man therefore speaks of his own pleasure and care : the hunter of his games ; the ploughman of his team ; the soldier of his march and colours. If the heart were as full of God, the tongue could not refrain to talk of him. The rareness of christian communication argues the common poverty of holiness. If Christ be not in our hearts, we are godless ; if he be there without our joy, we are senseless ; if we rejoice in him, and speak not of him, we are shamefully unthankful ; every man takes, yea, raises occasion to bring in speech of what he likes. As I will think of thee always, O Lord, so it shall be my

joy to speak of thee often ; and if I find not opportunity, I will make it.

39. When I see my Saviour hanging in so forlorn a fashion upon the cross, his head drooping down, his temples bleeding with thorns, his hands and feet with the nails, and side with the spear ; his enemies round about him, mocking at his shame, and insulting over his impotence : how should I think any otherwise of him, than as himself complaineth, forsaken of his Father ? But when again I turn mine eyes, and see the sun darkened, the earth quaking, the rocks rent, the graves opened, the thief confessing, to give witness to him as the Son of God ; and when I see so strong a guard of Providence over him, that all his malicious enemies are not able so much as to break one bone of that body which seemed carelessly neglected, I cannot but wonder at his glory and safety. God is ever near, though oft unseen ; and if he wink at our distress, he sleepeth not ; the senses of others must not be judges of his presence and care ; but our faith. What care I if the world give me up for miserable, whilst I am under his secret protection ? O Lord, since thou art strong in our weakness, and present in our unconsciousness, give me but as much comfort in my sorrow as thou givest me security, and at my worst I shall be well.

40. In sins and afflictions, our course must be contrary ; we must begin to detest the greatest sin first, and descend to the hatred of the least ; we must first begin to suffer small afflictions with patience, that we may ascend to the endurance of the greatest. Then alone shall I be happy, when by this holy method I have drawn my soul to make conscience of avoiding the least sin, and not to shrink at the greatest affliction.

41. Forced favours are thankless ; and commonly with noble minds find no acceptance ; for a man to give his soul to God, when he sees he can no longer hold it ; or to bestow his goods, when he is forced to part with them ; or to forsake his sin, when he cannot follow it, are but cold acts of obedience. God sees our necessity, and scorns our compelled offers. While God gives me leave to keep my soul, yet then to bequeath it to him, and while strength and opportunity serve me to sin, then to forsake it, is both accepted and crowned : God loves neither grudged nor necessary gifts ; I will offer betimes, that he may vouchsafe to take ; I will give him the best, that he may accept all. O God, give me this grace, that I may give thee myself, freely and seasonably ; and then I know thou canst not but accept me, because this gift is thine own.

42. It is good for young people to look forward, and propose the best things to themselves ; for the aged to look backward, and repent them of that in which they have failed, and to recollect themselves for the present : But in my middle age, I will look both backward and forward ; comparing my hopes with my proof ; redeeming the time, ere it be all spent, that my recovery may prevent my repentance. It is both folly and misery to say, ' this I might have done.'

43. It is the wonderful mercy of God, both to forgive us our debts to him in our sins, and to make himself a debtor to us in his promises. So that now both ways the soul may be sure ; since he neither calls for those debts which he has once forgiven ; nor withdraws those favours and that heaven which he has promised ; but as he is a merciful creditor to forgive, so he is a true debtor to pay whatsoever he has undertaken : whence it comes to pass, that the penitent sinner owes nothing to God but love and obedience ; and God owes still much and all to him : for he owes as much as he has promised ; and what he owes by virtue of his blessed promise, we may challenge. O infinite mercy ! He that lent us all that we have, and in whose debt books we run hourly forward, till the sum be countless, yet owes us more, and bids us look for payment. I cannot de-

serve the least favour he can give ; yet will I as confidently challenge the greater, as if I deserved it. Promise indebteth no less than loan or desert.

44. Many christians do greatly wrong themselves with a dull sullenness ; who not suffering themselves to delight in any worldly thing, are thereupon oft times so heartless, that they delight in nothing. These men, like to careless guests, when they are invited to an excellent banquet, lose their dainties for want of a stomach ; and lose their stomach for want of exercise. A good conscience keeps always good cheer : he must necessarily fare well that has it, unless he lose his appetite by neglect and slothfulness. It is a shame for us christians not to find as much joy in God, as worldlings do in their forced merriments ; and the licentious in their sins.

45. He that takes his own cares upon himself, loads himself in vain with an uneasy burden. The fear of what may come, expectation of what will come, and inability of redressing all these, must needs breed him continual torment. I will cast my cares upon God ; he hath bidden me : they cannot hurt him ; he can redress them.

46. When ought falls out contrary to that I purposed, it shall content me that God purposed it as it is fallen out ; so the thing has attained his own end, while it missed mine : I know what I

would, but God knows what I should will. It is enough that his will is done, though mine be crossed.

47. Extraordinary events each man can wonder at. The frequency of God's best works causeth neglect ; not that they are worse for commonness, but because we are soon cloyed by the same conceit, and have contempt bred in us through familiarity ; I will learn to note God's power and wisdom, and to give him praise of both in his ordinary works : so those things, which are but trivial to the most ignorant, shall be wonders to me ; and that not for nine days, but for ever.

48. It is just with God, as the proud man is base in himself, so to make him basely esteemed in the eyes of others, and at last to make him base without pride. I will condemn a proud man, because he is base, and pity him, because he is proud.

49. I will not live with God, and in God, without his acquaintance, knowing it my happiness to have such a friend ; I will not let one day pass without some act of renewing my familiarity with him : not giving over till I have given him some testimony of my love to him, and joy in him ; and till he has left behind him some pledge of his continual favour for me.

50. There never was an age, perhaps, that more boasted of knowledge, and yet never any

that had less soundness. He that knows not God, knoweth nothing as he ought ; and he that loves not God, knows him not ; for he is so amiable and infinitely full of delight, that whoever knows him cannot but admire him. The little love of God then argues the great ignorance even of those that profess knowledge. I will not suffer my affections to run before my knowledge : for then I shall love fashionably only, because I hear God is worthy of love ; and so be subject to relapses : but I will ever lay knowledge as the ground of my love ; so as I grow in divine knowledge, I shall still profit in an heavenly zeal.

51. What labour should I willingly undertake in my journey to the true land of promise, the celestial Jerusalem, where I shall see and enjoy my Saviour himself ? What tribute of pain or of death should I refuse to pay for my entrance, not into a sepulchre, but his palace of glory ? And that not to look upon, but to possess it ?

52. There are two things in every good work ; honour and profit. The latter God bestows upon us, the former he keeps to himself. The profit of our works redounds not to God ; our well doing extends not to him. The honour of our work may not be allowed us ; God will not give his glory to another. I will not abridge God of his part, that he may not bereave me of mine.

53. I see iron first heated in the fire, and after beaten and hardened with cold water ; thus will I deal with an offending friend, first heat him with deserved praise of his virtue, and then beat upon him with reprehension : so good nurses, when their children are fallen, first take them up, and speak them fair ; chide them afterwards : gentle speech is a good preparative for rigour. He shall see that I love him by my approbation ; and that I love not his faults by my reproof. If he love himself, he will love those that dislike his vices ; and if he love not himself, it matters not whether he love me.

54. If we could think, it is my God that cheers me with his presence and blessings while I prosper ; that afflicts me in love when I am dejected ; my Saviour is at God's right hand ; my angels stand in his presence ; it could not be but God's favour would be sweeter, his chastisements more easy, his benefits more effectual. I am not mine own while God is not mine ; and while he is mine, since I do possess him, I will enjoy him.

55. All true earthly pleasure forsook man, when he forsook his Creator. What honest and holy delight he took before in the dutiful services of the obsequious creatures ; in the contemplation of that admirable variety and strangeness of their properties ; in seeing their sweet accordance with

each other, and all with himself? Now much of the pleasure of many people is to set the creatures together by the ears, sporting themselves only with that deformity which was bred through the fault of man: yea, there have been some that have delighted to see one man spill the blood of another upon the sand, and have shouted for joy at the sight of that slaughter, which has fallen out upon no other quarrel but the pleasure of the beholders. There are better qualities of the creature which we pass over without pleasure. In recreations I will choose those which are of best example and best use; seeking those by which I may not only be the merrier, but the better.

56. In meddling with the faults of friends, I have observed many wrongful courses, through fear, self-love, or indiscretion. Some I have seen, like unmerciful and covetous surgeons, keep the wound raw, which they might have seasonably remedied, for their own gain. Others, that have laid healing plaisters to skin it over, when there has been more need of corrosives to eat out the dead flesh within. Others, that have galled and drawn, when there has been nothing but solid flesh that has needed only filling up. Others, that have healed the sore, but have left an unsightly scar of discredit behind them. He that would do good this way must have fidelity, courage, dis-

cretion, patience. Fidelity, not to bear with ; courage to reprove them ; discretion to reprove them well ; patience to wait the progress of amendment ; making much of good beginnings, and putting up with many repulses, bearing with many weaknesses ; still hoping, still soliciting ; as knowing that those who have been long used to setters cannot but halt a while when they are taken off.

57. As those who have tasted of some delicate dish find other plain dishes unpleasant ; so it fares with those who have once tasted of heavenly things, they cannot but condemn the best worldly pleasures. As, therefore, some dainty guest, knowing there is so pleasant fare to come, I will reserve my appetite for it, and not suffer myself to be cloyed with the coarse diet of the world.

58. A man's opinion is in others, his being is in himself. Let me know myself ; let other people guess at me. Let others either envy or pity me, I care not, so long as I enjoy myself.

59. That which the French proverb has of sickness is true of all evils ; that they come on horseback, and go away on foot. We have oft seen a sudden fall, or the surfeit of one meal, the occasion of death ; whereas pleasures come like oxen, slow and heavily, and go away like post horses upon the spur. Sorrows, because they are

lingering guests, I will entertain but moderately ; knowing that the more they are made of, the longer they will continue : and for pleasures, because they stay not, and do but call to drink at my door, I will use them as passengers, with slight respect. He is his own best friend that makes least of both of them.

60. The joy of a christian in these worldly things is limited, and ever awed with fear of excess, but recompensed abundantly with his spiritual mirth : whereas the worldling gives the reins to the mind, and pours himself into pleasure, fearing only that he shall not enjoy enough. He that is but half a christian lives but miserably ; for he neither enjoys God nor the world : not God, because he has not goodness enough to make him his own ; nor the world, because he has some taste of holiness, enough to show him the vanity and sin of his pleasures. So the sound christian hath his heaven above ; the worldling here below ; the unsettled christian no where.

61. Good deeds are very fruitful, and not so much of their own nature as of God's blessing multipliable. We think ten in the hundred extreme usury. God gives us more than a hundred for ten ; yea, above the increase of the gain which we commend most for multiplication ; for out of one good action of ours God produces a

thousand ; the harvest whereof is perpetual : even the faithful actions of the old patriarchs, the constant sufferings of ancient martyrs still live, and do good by their example to all succeeding ages. For public actions of virtue, besides that for the present they are comfortable to the doer, are also exemplary to others ; and as they are more beneficial, so are they more crowned in us. If good deeds were utterly barren and incommodious, I would seek after them for the conscience of their own goodness : how much more shall I now be encouraged to perform them, since they are so profitable both to myself and to others, and to me in others ? My principal care shall be, that while my soul lives in glory in heaven, my good actions may live upon earth ; and that they may be put into the bank and multiplied, while my body lies consuming in the grave.

62. A christian, for the sweet fruit he bears to God and men, is compared to the noblest of all plants, the vine. Now as the most generous vine, if it be not pruned, runs out into many superfluous stems, and grows at last weak and fruitless ; so does the best man, if he be not cut short of his desires, and pruned with afflictions. If it be painful to bleed, it is worse to wither. Let me be pruned that I may grow, rather than cut up to be burnt.

63. Those that do but superficially taste of divine knowledge, find little sweetness in it, and are apt to become indifferent for the want of a higher relish ; whereas if they would dive deep into the sea, they would find fresh water near to the bottom : that it savours not well at the first is the fault of their distempered palate. Good metals and minerals are not usually found near the surface of the earth, but in the bowels of it ; no good miner casts away his mattock, because he finds a vein of tough clay, or a shelf of stone ; but still delves lower, and passing through many changes of soil ; at last comes to his rich treasure. We are too soon discouraged in our spiritual gains. I will still persevere to seek, hardening myself against all difficulty. There is comfort even in seeking hope ; and there is joy in hoping good success ; and in that success is happiness.

64. In whatever business I go about, I will inquire what I do for the substance, how for manner, why for the intention : for the two first, I will consult with God ; for the last with my own heart.

65. I can do nothing without a million of witnesses ; the conscience is as a thousand witnesses, and God is as a thousand consciences : I will therefore so deal with men, as knowing that God sees me ; and so with God, as if the world

saw me ; so with myself, and both of them, as knowing that my conscience sees me ; and so with them all, as knowing I am always overlooked by my accuser, by my judge.

66. There is an holy carelessness, free from distrust. In these earthly things I will so depend on my Maker, that my trust in him may not exclude all my labour ; and yet so labour, having confidence in him, as my endeavour may be void of perplexity.

67. The precepts and practice of those with whom we live, avail much on either part. For a man not to be vicious, where he has no provocations to evil, is less commendable ; but for a man to be virtuous in the midst of powerful temptations, this is truly praise worthy. To sequester ourselves from the company of the world, that we may depart from their vices, proceeds from a base and distrusting mind ; as if we would so force goodness upon ourselves, that therefore only we would be good because we cannot be ill. But for a man so to be personally and locally in the throng of the world, as to withdraw his affections from it, to use it, and yet to contemn it at once, to compel it to his service without any infection, becomes well the noble courage of a christian. The world shall be mine, I will not be his ; and yet so mine, that his evil shall be still his own.

68. He that lives in God cannot be weary of his life, because he ever finds both somewhat to do, and somewhat to solace himself with ; cannot be very loath to part with it, because he shall enter into a nearer life and society with that God in whom he delights. Whereas, he that lives without him, lives many times uncomfortably here, because partly he knows not any cause of joy in himself, and partly he finds not any worthy employment to occupy the time ; he dies miserably, because he either knows not whither he goes, or knows he goes to punishment. There is no true life, but the life of faith. O Lord, let me live out of the world with thee, if thou wilt ; but let me not live in the world without thee.

69. Sin is both evil in itself, and the effect of a former evil, and the cause of sin following ; a cause of punishment, and, lastly, a punishment itself. It is a damnable iniquity in man to multiply one sin upon another ; but to punish one sin by another, in God is a judgment both most just and most fearful ; the storehouse of God has not a greater vengeance : with other punishments the body smarts ; the soul with this. I care not how God offends me with punishments, if he punish me not with offending him.

70. I have seen some afflict their bodies with wilful famine, and scourges of their own making.

God spares me that labour ; for he whips me daily by the scourge of a weak body, and sometimes with ill tongues. He holds me short many times of the feeling of his comfortable presence, which is in truth a hunger so much more miserable than that of the body, by how much the soul is more tender, and the food denied more excellent. He is my Father ; infinitely wise to proportion my correction to my state, and infinitely loving, in fitting me with a due measure. He is a presumptuous child that will make choice of his own rod. Let me learn to make a right use of his correction, and I shall not need to correct myself. And if it should please God to remit his hand a little, I will govern my body as a master, not as a tyrant.

71. If God had not said, blessed are those that hunger, I know not what could keep weak christians from sinking in despair : many times all I can do is to find and complain that I want him, and wish to recover him : now this is my stay, that he in mercy esteems us not only by having, but by desiring also ; and after a sort accounts us to have that which we want and desire to have : and my soul assuming, tells me I do nseignedly wish him, and long after that grace I miss. Let me desire still more, and I know I shall not desire always. There was never a soul miscarried in

longing after grace. O blessed hunger, that ends always in fulness ! I am sorry that I can but hunger ; and yet I would not be full, for the blessing is promised to the hungry : Give me more, Lord, yet so that I may hunger more. Let me hunger more, and I know I shall be satisfied.

72. There is more in the christian than thou seest. For he is both an entire body of himself, and he is a limb of another more excellent, even that glorious mystical body of his Saviour, to whom he is so united, that the actions of either are reciprocally referred to each other. For, on the one side, the christian lives in Christ, dies in Christ, in Christ fulfils the law, possesses heaven : on the other, Christ is persecuted by Saul in his members, and is persecuted in Paul afterwards by others : he suffers in us, he lives in us, he works in and by us ; so thou canst not do either good or harm to a christian, but thou doest it to his Redeemer, to whom he is invisibly united. Thou seest him as a man, and therefore worthy of favour for humanity's sake ; thou seest him not as a christian, worthy of honour for his secret, and yet true union with our Saviour. I will love every christian for what I see ; honour him for what I shall see.

73. How many flattering poets have promised immortality of name to their princes, who

now together are buried long since in forgetfulness ! I will not care whether I be known, or remembered, or forgotten amongst men, if my name and good actions may live with God in the records of eternity.

74. If it be good living here, where our sorrows are changed with joys ; what is it to live above, where our joys change not ? I cannot look upon the body of the sun, and yet I cannot see without the light of it. I cannot behold the glory of thy saints, O Lord, yet without the knowledge of it I am blind. If thy creature be so glorious to us here below, how glorious shall thyself be to us when we shall be above this sun ? This sun shall not shine upward, where thy glory shineth : the greater light extinguishes the lesser. O thou sun of righteousness, which shall only shine to me when I am glorified, do thou warm, enlighten, comfort me with the beams of thy presence, till I be glorified. Amen.

TRUE PEACE OF MIND.

1. THE guilty man may have a seeming truce, a true peace he cannot have. The countenance, words, and behaviour of the wicked frequently evince their inward uneasiness ; which argues plainly that sin is not so smooth at its first motions, as turbulent afterwards. *There is no peace to the wicked.*

2. The careless sinner may count it no shame to sin, and yet count it a shame to be checked with remorse, especially so as to be seen by others : to him repentance seems unworthy of one who professes wisdom and valour. Such a man can grieve when none sees it but himself ; can laugh when others see it, himself feels not. I may confidently tell the careless sinner, the time will come in which he will deeply sigh, and therefore sorrow desperately, because he sorrowed not sooner.

3. There can be, therefore, no peace without reconciliation ; we cannot be quiet friends with ourselves, till we are friends with God ; for our conscience, which is our best friend, while we sin not, like an honest servant takes his master's part

against us, when we sin ; not daring to be so kind to us, as to be unfaithful to God. There can be no reconciliation without remission. There can be no remission without satisfaction. Where then shall we find satisfaction but in him whom God hath appointed to be *our peace*, even Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, the anointed of God, the mediator between God and man ? O the love and condescension of the Son of God, to divest himself of his glory, that he might put on our shame and bear our sins ! O the invaluable purchase of our peace ! O ransom enough for more worlds ! Here is mercy without example, without measure ! God offers peace to man, the holy seeks to the unjust, the potter to the clay, the king to the traitor. We are unworthy to be received to peace though we should desire it : what are we then that it should be offered to us ? An easy condition of so great a benefit ; he requires us not to earn it, but to accept it of him. What could he give more ? What could he require less of us ?

4. The purchase therefore of our peace was paid at once, yet must it be severally reckoned to every soul whom it shall benefit. If we accept not the blessings, which Christ offers, what is sufficient in him cannot be effectual to us. Faith is the spiritual hand whereby we apprehend the offers of our Saviour ; which is no other than an affiance

in the Mediator. From hence it is, that we are interested in all that either God has promised, or Christ has performed. Hence we have from God both forgiveness and love, the ground of peace and glory. Hence of enemies we become more than friends, even sons ; and as sons, may expect not only careful provision and safe protection on earth, but an everlasting inheritance in heaven. This field is so spacious, that it were easy for a man to lose himself in it ; and if I should spend my pilgrimage in this walk, my time would sooner end than my way. Behold now, where only the weary dove may find an olive of peace. The apprehending of this all-sufficient satisfaction makes it ours ; upon our satisfaction we have remission ; upon remission, follows reconciliation ; upon our reconciliation, peace.

5. The power of nature is a good plea for those who acknowledge nothing above nature. But for a Christian to excuse his intemperance by his natural inclination, and to say, I am born choleric, morose, amorous, is an apology worse than the fault. Wherefore serves religion, but to correct and govern nature ? We are so much Christians, as we can rule ourselves ; the rest is but form and speculation. Yea, the very thought of our profession is so powerful, that it assuages those inward tempests that were raised by the affections.

The unregenerate mind is not capable of this power ; and therefore, through the mutinies of his passions, cannot but be subject to perpetual inquietude. There is neither remedy nor hope in this state ; but the christian, who has accustomed himself to the fear of God, and the exercises of true mortification, by only looking at his profession, cures the burning venom of those serpents that lurk within him. Hast thou nothing but nature ? expect not to find peace. God is not prodigal to cast away his best blessings on such unworthy subjects. Art thou a christian ? do but remember thou art so ; and then if thou darest, if thou canst, yield to the excess of passions.

6. If there could be any human receipt prescribed to avoid evils, it would be purchased at a high rate. But it is impossible that earth should redress that which is sent from heaven ; and if it could be done, even the want of miseries would prove miserable ; for the mind, cloyed with continual felicity, would grow a burden to itself, loathing that at last, which intermission would have made pleasant. Summer is the sweetest season by general consent, when the earth is both the richest with increase, and most gorgeous for ornament ; yet if it were not revived with interchanges of cold frosts, and piercing winds, who could live ? Summer would be no summer, if

winter did not both lead it in, and follow it out. We may not therefore either hope or strive to escape all crosses ; some we may. What thou canst, fly from ; what thou canst not, allay and mitigate. In crosses, universally let this be thy rule ; make thyself none, escape some, bear the rest, sweeten all.

7. There can be no remedy for imaginary crosses, but wisdom, which teaches to estimate events as they are ; like a true glass, that represents all things to our minds in their due proportion ; so that crosses, which are not real, may not seem to be, nor small and gentle ones seem great and intolerable. Give to thy body hellebore, thy mind good counsel, thine ear to thy friend, and these fantastical evils shall vanish away like themselves.

8. He who will have and hold genuine tranquillity, must be able to enjoy God, and to realise his presence ; that when he finds manifold occasions of vexation in these earthly things, he, overlooking them all, and having recourse to his comforter, may find in him such matter of contentment, that he may pass over all these petty grievances with contempt. The mind of man needs some refuge, and, as we say of the elephant, cannot rest, unless it have something to lean upon.

9. The soul, which has placed his refuge above, is sure that the ground of his comfort cannot be equalled by any earthly sorrow, cannot be made variable by any vicissitudes of time ; but is infinitely above all casualties, and free from all uncertainties. What state is there, wherein this heavenly stay shall not afford me, not only peace, but joy ? Am I in prison ? Lo ! there *Algerius*, that amiable martyr, found more light than in a state of liberty. What walls can keep out that infinite Spirit, which fills all things ? What darkness can be where God dwells ? What sorrow, where he comforts ? Am I wandering in banishment ? Can I go whither God is not ? What sea can divide between him and me ? Am I contemned by the world ? It is enough for me that I am honoured of God. Let me know that God favours me, then I have liberty in prison, home in banishment, honour in contempt, wealth in losses, health in sickness, life in death, and, in all these, happiness.

10. A strong and resolute repulse of sinful pleasure is truly pleasant ; for therein the conscience gains a victory, and triumphs in itself, as being now lord of its own dominions. No man knows the pleasure of this thought, ‘ I have done well,’ but he who has felt it. It is a false slander raised against christianity, that it makes people

gloomy and melancholick ; for therefore are we heavy, because we are not enough christians. We have religion enough to disapprove forbidden pleasures, not enough to overcome them. But if we be once conquerors over ourselves, and have devoted ourselves wholly to God, there must be heavenly mirth in the soul. Lo, hear, ye philosophers, the true musick of heaven, which the good heart continually hears, and answers it in just measures of joy. Others may talk of joy, as a thing they have heard of, or vainly fancied ; only the christian feels it ; and in comparison with this, scorns the idle ribaldry and scurrilous mirth of the profane.

11. It is not easy to determine, whether it be worse to do a lawful act with doubting, or an evil with resolution ; since that, which in itself is good, is made evil to me by my doubt ; and what is in nature evil, is in this one point not evil to me, because I do it upon a verdict of conscience : so now my judgment offends in not following the truth : I offend not in that I follow my judgment : wherein if the most wise God had left us to rove only according to the aim of our own conjectures, it would have been less faulty to be scepticks in our actions, and either not to judge at all, or to judge amiss. But now that he has given us a perfect rule of eternal equity and truth, whereby to direct

the sentences of our judgment ; that uncertainty which allows no peace to us, will afford us no excuse before the tribunal of heaven : wherefore, then only is the heart quiet, when our actions are grounded upon judgment, and our judgment upon truth.

12. Wherefore, if we have not vowed enmity with ourselves, if we be not in love with vexation and misery, if we be not obstinately careless of our own good, let us shake off this dangerous and desperate negligence, and quicken these dull hearts to a lively and effectual search of what only can yield them sweet and abiding contentment ; which, once attained, how shall we triumph over evils, and bid them do their worst ? How shall we, under this calm and quiet day, laugh at the rough weather and unsteady motions of the world ? How shall heaven and earth smile upon us, and we on them ; commanding the one, aspiring to the other ? How pleasant shall be our life, while neither joys nor sorrows can distemper it with excess ? yea, while the matter of joy, that is within us, turns all the most sad occurrences into pleasure ? How dear and welcome shall be our death, that shall but lead us from one heaven to another, from peace to glory ? Go now, ye vain and idle worldlings, and please yourselves in the large extent of your possessions, or in the price

and fashions of your wardrobe, or in the charming varieties of your delicate gardens, or in your full coffers of red and white earth ; or if there be any other earthly thing more alluring, more precious, enjoy it, possess it, and let it possess you : let me have only my peace ; and let me never want it, till I envy you.

CONTEMPLATIONS
ON
PASSAGES OF THE SACRED HISTORY.

OF ABRAHAM.

THE calling of God never leaves men where it finds them. The earth is the Lord's, and he gives it to whom he will. The wise and faithful are satisfied with the allotments of Providence. It is ample comfort to a good man, wherever he is, that he is acquainted. We are never out of our way, while we follow the calling of God. Never any man lost by his obedience to the Most High. The power of faith can make future things present. If we be the true children of Abraham, we have already, while we sojourn here on earth, the possession of our land of promise : while we seek our country we have it.

Sense must yield to faith ; unhappy would it be for us if we must judge of our future state by the present.

Even Abraham sometimes doubted : God had said, I will make of thee a great nation ; Abraham says, the Egyptians will kill me : he that lived by faith, yet shrinks and sins. How vainly shall we hope to believe without all fear, and to live without infirmities ? Some little aspersions of unbelief cannot hinder the praise and power of faith ; Abraham believed, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. He who doubted twice of his own life, through imperfection, doubted not of the life of his posterity, notwithstanding the age of Sarah : yet it was more difficult that his posterity should live in Sarah, than that Sarah's husband should live in Egypt : this was above nature, yet he believes it. Sometimes the believer sticks at easy trials, and yet breaks through the greatest temptations without fear. Abraham was old ere this promise and hope of a son ; and still the older, the more incapable : yet God makes him wait twenty-five years for performance. No time is long to faith, which has learned to defer hope without fainting and irksomeness.

Never any man was a loser by believing the word of God : faith is ever recompensed with glory.

Well is that part of us lost, which may give assurance of the salvation of the whole. Our faith is not yet sound, if it have not taught us to

suffer pain in obedience to the command of God, and to love his sacraments more than our own ease.

OF ISAAC SACRIFICED.

IT is too much tenderness to respect the censures and constructions of others, when we have a direct word from God.

If Abraham's heart had not been elevated above natural affection, that question of his dear, innocent, and religious son, had melted it into compassion, *My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the sacrifice?* I know not whether that word, *My father*, did not strike Abraham as deep as the knife of Abraham could strike his son ; yet does he not so much as appear to think, but still persists and conceals, and where he meant not prophesies, *My son, God will provide a lamb for the burnt-offering.*

The commands of God are sometimes harsh in the beginning and proceeding, but in the conclusion always comfortable. True spiritual comforts are commonly late and sudden : God defers on purpose, that our trials may be perfect, our deliverance welcome, our recompence glorious.

The only way to find comfort in earthly things, is to surrender them, in a faithful carelessness, into the hands of God.

Whatever is dearest to us upon earth is our Isaac ; happy are we if we can sacrifice it to God ; those shall never rest with Abraham, that cannot sacrifice with him.

OF LOT AND SODOM.

GOD never suffers any man to lose by the humble remission of his right in a desire of peace.

The houses of holy men are full of heavenly spirits when they know it not ; they pitch their tents in ours, and visit us when we see not ; and when we feel not, protect us : it is the honour of saints to be attended by angels.

There can be no warrant for us to sin, lest others should sin : it is for God to prevent sins with judgments ; it is not for men to prevent a greater sin with a less. God meant better to Lot, than to suffer his weak offer to be accepted. Those who are bent on villany are more exasperated by dissuasion, as some streams, when they are resisted by flood-gates, swell over the banks.

Many a one is hardened by the good word of God, and instead of receiving the counsel, rages

at the messenger. When men are grown to that pass, that they are no better by afflictions, and worse for admonition, God finds it time to strike.

No good man would be saved alone ; faith makes us charitable with neglect of all peril.

Were it not for God's dear children, who are intermixed with the world, it could not stand. The wicked owe their lives to those few pious people, whom they hate and persecute.

When God delivers us from destruction, he does not secure us against all affliction. Lot lost his wife, his allies, his substance, and betook himself to an uncomfortable solitude. Yet though he fled from company, he could not fly from sin : he, who could not be tainted by the sins of Sodom, is overcome by temptations in a cave. They, who should have comforted, betrayed him. How little are some hearts moved by the judgments of God ! The ashes of Sodom and the pillar of salt are scarce out of their sight, when they dare to indulge a criminal passion.

OF JACOB AND ESAU.

THERE was never any meat, except the forbidden fruit, so dearly bought as this broth of Jacob ; in both, the receiver and the eater is accus-

ed. Every true son of Israel will be content to purchase spiritual favours with earthly ; and that man has in him too much of the blood of Esau, who will not rather die than forego his birth-right.

It pleases God sometimes to effect his own will by our weaknesses ; yet not so as to justify our conduct, nor blemish his own actions.

One sin entertained fetches in another ; and if it be forced to lodge alone, will either depart or die.

Good Isaac sets his hands to try whether his ears informed him aright ; he feels the hands of him whose voice he suspected. That honest heart could not think, that the skin might be more easily counterfeited, than the lungs : a small satisfaction contents those whom guilt has not rendered scrupulous : Isaac believes and blesses the younger son in the garments of the elder. If our heavenly Father perceive on us the robes of Christ, our elder brother, we cannot depart from him unblessed.

The hopes of the wicked fail them, when they are at the highest ; whereas the children of God find those comforts in extremity, which they had not dared to expect.

It is just in God to deny us those favours, which we were careless in keeping, and which we under-valued while enjoying.

No motive can cause a good heart to repent that he has done well. How happy it is to know

the seasons of grace, and not to neglect them ! How desperate to have known, and to have neglected them !

There are some who care not to please God, who yet care for the outward favours of God, and are ready to murmur if they lack them, as if God were bound to them, and they were free. And yet so merciful is God, that he has second blessings for those that love him not, and gives them all they care for.

Both men and evil spirits are limited ; the stoutest heart cannot stand it out against God. He that can wrestle earnestly with God, is secure from the harms of men. Those minds which are exasperated by violence, and cannot be broken by fear, are yet bowed by love ; when the ways of a man please God, he will make his enemies to be at peace with him.

OF JACOB AND LABAN.

JACOB's heart was never so full of joy, as when his head lay hardest. God is often most present with us in our greatest dejections, and loves to give comfort to those, who are forsaken of their hopes.

God comes oftentimes home to us in our own kind, and even by the sin of others punishes our own, when we look not for it.

Rachel whom Jacob loved is barren : Leah who was despised is fruitful. How wisely God weighs out to us our favours and crosses in an equal balance ; so tempering our sorrows, that they may not oppress, and our joys that they may not transport us : each one has some matter of envy to others, and of grief to himself.

As the wicked have no peace with God, so the godly have no peace with the wicked world ; for if they prosper not, they are despised ; if they prosper, they are envied.

God makes fools of the enemies of his church ; he lets them proceed, that they may be frustrated ; and when they have gone to the utmost reach of their tether, he pulls them back to their task with shame. Lo, now, Laban leaves Jacob with a kiss ; Esau meets him with a kiss ; of the one he has an oath, tears of the other, peace with both : who shall need to fear man, that is in league with God ?

What a wonder is this ! Jacob received not so much hurt from all his enemies, as from his best friend. Not one of his hairs perished by Laban or Esau ; yet he lost a joint by the angel, and was sent halting to his grave : He who knows

our strength, will yet wrestle with us for our exercise, and loves our violence and importunity. O happy loss of Jacob ! He lost a joint, and won a blessing. It is a favour to halt from God, yet this favour is seconded with a greater. He is blessed, because he would rather halt, than leave ere he was blessed. If he had left sooner, he had not halted, but he had not prospered. That man shall go away sound, but miserable, who loves a limb more than a blessing. Surely, if Jacob had not wrestled with God, he had been foiled with evils : how many are the troubles of the righteous !

It is enough for us, if, when we are dead, we can rest with him in the land of promise. If the angel of the covenant once bless us, no pain, no sorrows can make us miserable.

OF JOSEPH.

I MARVEL not that Joseph had a double portion of Jacob's land, who had more than two parts of his sorrows. None of his sons did so truly inherit his afflictions ; none of them was either so miserable, or so great. Suffering is the way to glory. I see in Joseph not a clearer type of Christ, than of every christian ; because we are dear to our Father, and complain of sins, therefore we are

hated by our wicked brethren. If Joseph had not meddled with the faults of his brethren, yet he had been envied for the affection of his father ; but now malice is met in envy. There is nothing more thankless or dangerous, than to stand in the way of a resolute sinner. That which corrects and obliges the penitent, makes the wilful mind furious and revengeful.

All the spite of his brethren cannot make Joseph cast off the livery of his father's love. What need we care for the censures of men, if our hearts can tell us, that we are in favour with God ?

God will ever raise up some secret favourers of his real friends, amongst those that are most malicious. How well was this favour bestowed ? If Joseph had died of hunger in the pit, both Jacob and Judah, and all his brethren had died of hunger in Canaan. Little did the Ishmaelite merchants know what a treasure they bought, carried, and sold ; more precious than all their balms and myrrhs. Little did they think that they had in their hands the lord of Egypt, the jewel of the world. Why should we condemn any man's meanness, when we know not his destiny ? He that is mourned for in Canaan, prospers in Egypt under Potiphar ; and of a slave is made ruler : thus God means to prepare him for a greater charge. He must first rule Potiphar's house, then

Pharaoh's kingdom. His own service is his least good, for his very presence procures a common blessing : a whole family shall fare the better for one Joseph. Virtue is not looked upon alike with all eyes : his fellows praise him, his master trusts him, his mistress affects him too much. All the spite of his brethren was not so great a cross to him, as the inordinate affection of his mistress.

Temptations on the right hand are now more perilous and hard to resist, by how much they are more plausible and glorious ; but the heart that is bent upon God knows how to walk steadily and indifferently between the pleasures and fears of evil. He saw, this pleasure would advance him : he knew what it was to be the minion of one of the greatest ladies in Egypt ; yet resolves to condemn it. A good heart will rather lie in the dust, than rise by wickedness. How shall I do this, and sin against God ? He knew that all the honours of Egypt could not buy off the guilt of one sin, and therefore abhors not only her bed, but her company. He that will be safe from the acts of evil, must wisely avoid the occasions. As sin ends ever in shame, so it makes us past shame, that we may be emboldened to commit it.

The afflictions of God's children turn ever to their advantage ; no sooner is Joseph a prisoner, than a guardian of prisoners. Trust and honour

accompany him wherever he goes : in his father's house, in Potiphar's, in the prison, in the court ; still he has both power and rule.

How easily does our prosperity make us forget either the deservings or miseries of others ! But as God cannot neglect his own, so least of all in their sorrows.

Humility goes before honour ; serving and suffering are the best tutors to government. How well are God's children paid for their patience ! How happy are the issues of the faithful !

Good Jacob is punished with the common famine. No piety can exempt us from the evils of neighbourhood. No man can tell, by outward events, which is the patriarch, and which is the Canaanite.

It is vainly tempting God, to cast ourselves upon immediate provision, in the neglect of common means.

The mind must not always be judged by the outward face of the actions. God's countenance is oft times severe, and his hand heavy to those whom he best loves.

Nothing does so powerfully call home the conscience, as affliction ; nor is there need of any other art of memory for sin, besides misery.

It is a wise course to be jealous of our gain ; and more to fear, than desire abundance.

The danger of mistaking is requited by honest minds with more than restitution. It is not enough to find our own hearts clear in suspicious actions, except we satisfy others.

Good services heighten the guilt of unkindness, and our offences are increased with our obligations.

Our happiness is greater and sweeter, when we have well feared, and smarted with evils.

Injurious actions, healed by free forgiveness, are as not done: and as a bone, once broken, is stronger after well setting, so is love after reconciliation. But as wounds, once healed, leave a scar behind them, so remitted injuries leave commonly in the actors a guilty remembrance.

There is no earthly pleasure whereof we may not surfeit: of the spiritual we can never have enough.

The greater blessing obscures the less. He is not worthy of honour, who is not thankful for life.

The intermission of comforts has this advantage, that it sweetens our delight more in the return, than it was abated in the forbearance. God often, for a time, hides from us our Joseph, that we may be more joyous and thankful, in his recovery: this was the sincerest pleasure that ever Jacob had, which God therefore reserved for his age. And if the meeting of earthly friends be so unspeakably comfortable; how happy shall we be

in the presence of God our heavenly Father ! and of our blessed Redeemer, whom we sold to death by our sins ! and who now, after that noble triumph, has all power given him both in heaven and earth. Thus did Jacob rejoice, when he was to go out of promise, to a foreign nation, for Joseph's sake ; being glad that he should lose his country for his son. What shall our joy be, who must go out of this foreign land of our pilgrimage, to the home of our glorious inheritance, to dwell with none but our own ; in that better and more lightsome Goshen, free from all the incumbrances of this Egypt, and full of all the riches and delights of God ! The guilty conscience can never think itself safe : so many years of Joseph's love could not secure his brethren of remission. Those who know they have deserved ill, are apt to misinterpret favours, and to think they cannot be beloved. All that while his goodness seemed but concealed, and sleeping malice, which they feared, in their father's last sleep, would awake and vent itself in revenge. Still therefore they plead the name of their father, though dead, not daring to use their own. Good intentions cannot be more wronged than by suspicion. It grieved Joseph to see their fear, and to find they had not forgotten their own sin, and to hear them so passionately crave that which they already had. *Forgive the trespass*

of the servants of thy father's God. What a request for pardon was this ? What wound could be either so deep, or so festered, that this plaster could not cure ? They say not, the sons of thy father, for they knew Jacob was dead, and they had degenerated ; but the servants of thy father's God. How much stronger are the bonds of religion than of nature ! Had Joseph been rancorous, this deprecation had charmed him ; but now it dissolves him in tears. They are not so ready to acknowledge their old offence, as he is to protest his love ; and if he chid them for any thing, it was for this, that they thought they needed to entreat ; since they might know, it could not consist with the fellow-servant of their father's God to harbour maliciousness, to purpose revenge. *Am not I under God ?* And fully to secure them, he turns their eyes from themselves to the overruling providence of God, from the action to the event. *Ye thought evil against me ; but God meant it unto good.*

Even late confession finds forgiveness. Joseph had long ago seen their sorrow, never till now heard their acknowledgment. Mercy waits not for outward solemnities. How much more shall God pardon our sins, when he sees the truth of our repentance ?

THE AFFLICION OF ISRAEL.

EGYPT was long a peaceful harbour to the Israelites ; now it proves a painful prison. The posterity of Jacob find too late what it was for their forefathers to sell Joseph a slave into Egypt. Those whom the Egyptians honoured before as lords, they now contemn as drudges. One Pharaoh advances, whom another labours to depress. Not seldom the same man changes copies ; but if favours outlive one age, they prove decrepit and heartless. It is a rare thing to find posterity heirs of their father's love. How should men's favour be otherwise than like themselves, variable and inconstant ? There is no certainty but in the favour of God, *with whom there is no variableness*, and whose love is entailed upon a thousand generations.

There is scarcely a sight more hateful to a wicked man, than the prosperity of the righteous ; and none but the spirit of that true harbinger of Christ can teach us to say with contentment, *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

Come, let us work wisely. Lewd men call wicked policies wisdom, and their success happiness : herein the great adversary is wiser than they, who both lays the plot, and makes them

such fools, as to mistake villany and madness for the best virtue.

As God afflicted the Israelites with a mind very different from that of the Egyptians, God to discipline them, the Egyptians to suppress them ; so he caused the event to differ. Who would not have thought with these Egyptians, that misery so extreme should not have made the Israelites unfit both for increase and resistance ? Moderate exercise strengthens, extremes destroy nature. God, who sometimes works by contrary means, caused them to grow with depression, with persecution to multiply. How shall it not be well with the church of God, since the very malice of their enemies benefits them ? O the boundless goodness of God, which turns our poisons into cordials ! The vine of God's planting bears the better for pruning unto bleeding.

Oft times they who make conscience of greater sins, are overtaken with less. It is well and rare, if we can come forth of a dangerous action without any soil ; and if we have escaped the storm, that some after drops wet us not.

The monitions of God render ill men worse : the waves do not beat, nor roar any where so much, as at the bank which restrains them. Corruption, when it is checked, grows mad with rage ; as the vapour in the cloud would not make that fearful report, if it met not with opposition.

OF THE BIRTH AND BREEDING OF MOSES.

HAPPY is that resolution that can follow God in the dark, and let him dispose of the event.

No tyranny can prevent her from loving him, whom she is forbidden to keep ; her daughter's eyes must supply the place of her arms. And if the weak affection of a mother were thus effectually careful, what shall we think of him, whose love, whose compassion is, like himself, infinite ? His eye, his hand, cannot but be with us, even when we forsake ourselves. Moses had never a stronger protection about him ; no, not when all his Israelites were pitched around his tent in the wilderness, than now when he lay exposed alone upon the waves : no water, no Egyptian can hurt him. Neither friend nor mother dares own him, and now God challenges his custody. When we seem most neglected and forlorn in ourselves, then is God most present, most vigilant.

God's designs go beyond ours. We know not, when we see our foot over our threshold, what he has to do with us. This event seemed casual to this princess, but it was predetermined and provided by God before she had existence. How wisely and sweetly God brings to pass his own purposes, when we are ignorant and regardless !

See here a merciful daughter of a cruel father : it is uncharitable, and often injurious, to judge of the disposition of the child by that of the parent. How does pity become great personages ! and most in extremities. It had been death in another to rescue the child of an Hebrew ; in her it was safe and noble. It is a happy thing, when great ones use their places to so much more charity, as their liberty is greater.

Religion does not call us to weak simplicity, but allows us as much of the serpent as of the dove : lawful policies have from God, both liberty in the use, and blessing in the success.

Education works wonderful changes, and is of great force either way : a little advancement has so puffed some up above themselves, that they have not only forgot their friends, but scorned their parents. All the honours of Egypt could win Moses not to call his nurse, mother, nor wean him from a willing misery with the Israelites. If we had the faith of Moses, we could not but make his choice. It is only our infidelity that binds us so to the world, and makes us prefer the momentary pleasures of sin, to that everlasting recompence of reward.

A good heart cannot endure to be happy alone ; and must needs, unbidden, share with others in their miseries. He is no true Moses, who is not moved by the calamities of God's church.

Still the great adversary is thus busy, and too many Christians are thus malicious, that, as if they wanted enemies, they fly in one another's faces. While we are in this Egypt of the world, all unkind strifes would easily be composed, if we did not forget that we are brethren.

Vexations may render some more miserable, not more humble ; as we see sicknesses make some tractable, others more froward. It is no easy matter to bear a reproof well, if never so well tempered ; no sugar can bereave a pill of its bitterness. None but the gracious can say, *Let the righteous smite me.* Next to the not deserving a reproof, is the well taking of it. But who is so ready to except and exclaim, as the wrong doer ? The patient do not reply. One injury draws another : first to his brother, then to his reproof. Guiltiness will make a man stir upon every touch ; he that was wronged would incline to reconciliation : malice makes men incapable of good counsel ; and there are none so great enemies to justice, as those who are enemies to peace.

A small authority will serve for a loving admonition. It is the duty of men, much more of christians, to advise against sin.

A wicked heart never looks inward to itself, but outward to the quality of the reproof ; if that afford exception, it is enough ; anger prevents

profit. What matter is it to me, who admonishes me ? Let me look home into myself : let me look to his advice. If the advice be good, it is more shame to me, to be reproved by an evil man. As a good man's allowance cannot warrant evil, so an evil man's reproof may remedy evil.

No friend is so commodious in some cases, as an adversary. As it is good for a man to have an enemy, so it shall be our wisdom to make use of his most choleric objections.

A good man will be doing good, wheresoever he is ; his trade is a compound of charity and justice : as therefore evil dispositions cannot be changed with airs, no more will good.

No adversity can make a good man neglect good duties.

A good nature is ready to answer courtesies : we cannot do too much for a thankful man. And if a courteous heathen reward the watering of sheep in this bountiful manner, how shall our God recompense but a cup of cold water, that is given to a disciple ?

No circumstance either of the dearness of the solicitor, or our own engagement, can bear out a sin with God. Those who are unequally yoked may not ever look to draw one way. True love to the person cannot long agree with dislike of their religion. He had need to be more than a

man, who has a Zippórah in his bosom, and would have true zeal in his heart.

How hardly can we forget the place of our abode, or education, although never so homely ! And if Moses so thought of his Egyptian home, where was nothing but bondage and tyranny ; how shall we think of that home of ours above, where is nothing but rest and blessedness ?

OF MOSES' CALLING.

THAT great men may not be ashamed of honest vocations, the greatest men that ever were have been content to take up with mean trades. The contempt of honest callings, in those which are well born, argues pride without wit.

There can be no fitter disposition for a leader of God's people, than constancy in his undertakings, without either weariness or change.

He that hath true worth in himself, and familiarity with God, finds more pleasure in the deserts of Midian, than others can do in the palaces of kings.

While Moses was tending his sheep, God appeared to him. God never graces the idle with his visions : when he finds us in our callings, we find him in the tokens of his mercy. God was

ever with Moses, yet was he not seen till now. He is never absent from his friends, but sometimes makes their senses witnesses of his presence. In small matters may be greater wonders.

That a bush should burn, is no marvel; but that it should not be consumed in burning, is justly miraculous. God chooses not ever great subjects, wherein to exercise his power: it is enough that his power is great in the smallest. When I look upon this burning bush with Moses, it seems to me I can never see a worthier and more lively emblem of the church; that in Egypt was in the furnace, yet wasted not. Since that time, how often has it been flaming, but never consumed! The same power that enlightens it, preserves it; and to none but to his enemies is he a consuming fire.

It is good to come to the place of God's presence; howsoever, God may, perhaps, speak to thy heart, though thou come but for novelty: even those who have come upon curiosity have been oft taken: absence is without hope. If Moses had not come, he had not been called out of the bush.

God makes way for his greatest messages by astonishment and admiration. If our hearts were more filled with awe of God, his messages would be more effectual to us. By that appearance God meant to arrest the attention of Moses, yet when

he is coming, inhibits him, *Come not hither*. We must come to God, but not come too near him. When we meditate on the great mysteries of his word, we come to him : we come too near him, when we pry into his counsels. The sun and the fire say of themselves, come not too near : how much more the light unto which none can attain ? We all have our limits set us.

I see Moses now at the bush, hiding his face at so mild a representation. Hereafter, we shall see him in this very mount, between heaven and earth, in thunder, lightning, smoke, earthquakes, speaking face to face with God, and without terror : God was then more terrible, but Moses was more acquainted with him. This was his first meeting with God ; further acquaintance makes him familiar, and familiarity makes him bold. Frequent communion gives us freedom of access to God, and enables us to pour out our hearts to him with fulness and confidence, as to our friends. Twice did Moses hide his eyes ; once for the glory which God put upon him, which made his face so shine that others could not behold him ; once for God's own glory, which he could not behold. Marvel not at this. Some of the creatures are too glorious for mortal eyes : how much more, when God appears to us in the easiest manner, must his glory needs overcome us ? Behold the difference

between our present and future state : then the more majesty of appearance, the more delight : when our sin shall be quite gone, all our fear at God's presence will be turned into joy. God appeared to Adam before his sin with comfort, but in the same form which, after his sin, was terrible : and if Moses cannot abide to look upon God's glory, when he descends to us in mercy, how shall wicked ones abide to see his fearful presence, when he shall bring them into judgment ! In this fire he flamed and consumed not, but in his wrath our God is a consuming fire.

First, Moses hides himself in fear, now in modesty. *Who am I ?* None in all Egypt or Midian was comparably fit for this embassage. Which of the Israelites had been brought up a courtier, a scholar, an Israelite by blood, an Egyptian by education, learned, wise, valiant, experienced ? Yet, *who am I ?* The more fit any man is for whatsoever vocation, the less he thinks himself. Forwardness argues insufficiency. The unworthy person thinks still, *who am I not ?* Modest beginnings give hopeful proceedings and happy endings. Once before, Moses had taken upon him and exerted himself, hoping then they would have known, that by his hand God meant to deliver Israel : but now, when it comes to the point, *who am I ?* God's best servants are not

ever in an equal disposition to good duties. If we find differences in ourselves sometimes, it argues both our imperfection and our dependence. It is our frailty that we shrink at those services, near at hand, to which, afar off, we are forward. How many of us can bid defiance to death, and suggest answers to absent temptations ; but when they come home to us, we fly off, and change our note, and instead of action, expostulate !

OF THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

HOW unworthy is he of life, who, with the same breath that he receives, denies the giver of it !

Whatsoever any man makes his god, besides the true one, shall be once his tormentor.

Who can marvel to see the best virtues counterfeited by wicked men, when he sees the devil emulating the miraculous power of God ?

God commonly uses satan in the execution of judgment, never in the works of mercy to men.

While wicked minds have their full scope, they never look above themselves ; but when once God crosses them in their proceedings, their want of success teaches them to give unto God his own.

Wheresoever mere nature is, she is still improvident of future good, sensible of present evil,

inconstant in good purposes ; unable, through unacquaintance, and unwilling to speak for herself, niggardly in her grants, and uncheerful.

Evermore when God's messengers are abandoned, destruction is near.

Tyranny is too weak where God says, increase and multiply. I know not where else the good herb overgrows the weeds : the church outstrips the world.

How sweetly doth God dispose of all second causes, that while they do their own will, they do his.

It is the wondrous mercy of God, that he has respect, as to his own glory, so to our infirmities.

He intends them wars hereafter, but after some long breathing and more preparation ; his goodness so orders all, that evils are not ready for us, till we be ready for them : and as he chooses, so he guides their way. That they might not err in that sandy and pathless wilderness, God himself goes before them : who could but follow cheerfully, when he sees God leading him.

Wicked men make equal haste, both to sin, and from judgment : but they shall one day find, that it is not more easy to run into sin, than impossible to run away from judgment.

What a sight was this to the Israelites, when they were now safe on the shore, to see their

enemies come floating after them upon the billows, and to find among the carcasses on the sands, their known oppressors, which now they can tread upon with triumph ! They did not before cry louder, than now they sing. Not their faith, but their sense, teaches them now to magnify that God after their deliverance, whom they hardly trusted for their deliverance.

THE WATERS OF MARAH.

IF we find but a little pleasure in life, we are ready to doat upon it. Every small contentment glues our affections to pleasant objects : and if here our imperfect delights hold us so fast, that we would not be loosed, how forcible will be those infinite joys above, when our souls shall be once possessed of them.

It is a great confirmation to any people, when they have seen the hand of God with their guide.

Never any have had so bitter draughts upon earth, as those whom God best loves : The palate is an ill judge of the favours of God. O my Saviour, thou didst drink a more bitter cup from the hand of thy Father, than any that I can drink for thee.

God can give us blessings with such a tang, that the fruition shall not much differ from the

want: so many a one has riches, not grace to use them; many have children, but such that they prefer barrenness. It is good so to desire blessings from God, that we may be the better for enjoying them; so to crave water, that it may not be attended with bitterness.

No benefit can stop the mouth of impatience; if our turn be not served for the present, former favours are either forgotten or contemned. No marvel if we deal so with men, when God receives this measure from us. One year of famine, one summer of pestilence, one moon of unseasonable weather, makes us overlook all the blessings of God; and we are more inclined to mutiny at a sense of what we suffer, than to praise him for our varieties of good: whereas favours bestowed in love, and received with gratitude, leave us both mindful and confident, and will not suffer us either to forget or distrust. O God, I have made an ill use of thy mercies, if I have not learned to be content with thy corrections.

I see and acknowledge the harbour, that we must put into in all our ill weather. It is to thee, O God, that we must pour out our hearts, which only can make our bitter water sweet.

We may not presume on likelihood, but depend on warrants; therefore Moses does not lift up his rod to the waters, but his hand and voice

to God. The hand of faith never knocked at heaven in vain.

All things are subject to the command of their Maker ; he that made all of nothing, can make every thing of any : there is so much power in every creature as he is pleased to give. It is the praise of Omnipotency to work by improbabilities ; Elisha with salt, Moses with wood, shall sweeten the bitter waters ; let no man despise the means, when he knows the author.

God taught his people by actions, as well as words. This entrance shewed them their whole journey ; wherein they should taste of much bitterness ; but at last, through the mercy of God, sweetened with comfort. Or did it not rather represent themselves in the journey ? in the fountains of whose hearts, were the bitter waters of manifold corruptions ; yet their unsavoury souls are sweetened by the graces of the divine Spirit. O blessed Saviour, the wood of thy cross, that is, the application of thy sufferings, is enough to sweeten a whole sea of bitterness. I care not how unpleasant a portion I find in this wilderness, if the power and benefit of the previous death of Christ may season it to my soul.

OF THE QUAILS AND MANNA.

CONTENTMENT is a rare blessing ; because it arises either from a fruition of all comforts, or a not desiring of some, which we have not. We are never so destitute, as not to have some benefits ; never so full, as not to want something, yea, as not to be full of wants. God has much ado with us ; either we lack health, or quietness, or children, or wealth, or company, or ourselves in all these.

Who cannot pray for his daily bread, when he has it in his house ? But when our own provision fails us, then not to distrust the provision of God is a noble trial of faith.

Nature is jocund and cheerful in prosperity : let God withdraw his hand, no sight, no trust. Those can praise him with timbrels for a present favour, who cannot depend upon him in the want of means for a future. We are never weary of receiving, but soon weary of depending.

Sins are so much greater, as they are more universal : so far is evil from being extenuated by the multitude of the guilty, that nothing can more aggravate it. With men, commonness may plead for favour : with God it pleads for judgment. Many hands draw the cable with more violence than few : the leprosy of the whole body is more loathsome than that of a part.

It is the folly of men, that in immediate judgments they can see the hand of God ; not in those, whose second causes are visible ; whereas God holds himself equally interested in all : challenging that there is no evil in the city, but from him. God strikes us with one hand, though by many instruments : the water may not lose the name, though it come by channels and pipes from the spring. It is owing to the weakness of our faith that in visible means we see not him who is invisible.

Our greatest pleasures are but pains in the loss of them. Every mind affects that which is like itself. Carnal minds are for the flesh-pots of Egypt, though bought with servitude ; spiritual minds are for the presence of God, though procured with famine ; and would rather die in God's presence, than live without him in the richest plenty.

Although life be naturally sweet, yet a little discontentment makes us weary. It is base and cowardly to think of running away, as soon as ever we are called from the garrison to the field. Then is our fortitude worthy of praise, when we can endure to be miserable.

All grudging is odious ; but most, when our hands are full. To complain in the midst of abundance, is shameful unthankfulness.

When a man would have looked that the anger of God should have appeared in fire ; now, behold, his glory appears in a cloud. O the exceeding long suffering of God, that hears their murmurings ; and, as if he had been bound to content them, instead of punishing, pleases them ! as a kind mother would deal with a fretful child, who rather stills him with the breast, than calls for the rod. One would have thought that the sight of the cloud of God should have dispelled the cloud of their distrust ; and this glory of God should have made them ashamed of themselves, and afraid of him : yet I do not hear them once say, what a mighty and gracious God we have distrusted. Nothing will content an impotent mind, but fruition. When a heart is hardened with any passion, it will endure much, ere it will yield to relent.

God delights in mercy to men, and to exceed not only their sins, but their very desires. How good shall we find him to those who please him, since he is so gracious to offenders ! If the most graceless Israelites be fed with quails and manna ; O, what goodness hath he laid up for them that love him ! As, on the contrary, if the righteous scarce be saved, where will the ungodly and sinners appear ? O God, thou canst, thou wilt make this difference. However with us men, the most

foward and stubborn oftentimes fare the best ; the righteous Judge of the world adjusts his remuneration to our real character ; and if his mercy sometimes provoke the worst to repentance by his temporal barriers, yet he ever reserves so much greater reward for the righteous, as eternity is beyond time, and heaven above earth.

They must come whom God brings. His hand is in all the motions of his meanest creatures. Not only we, but they, live and move in him. As not many quails, so not one sparrow falls without him : how much are the actions of his best creature, man, directed by his providence ? How ashamed might these Israelites have been, to see these creatures so obedient to their Creator, as to come and offer themselves to their slaughter ; while they went so repiningly to his service, and their own preferment ? Who can distrust the provision of the great Father of the world, when he sees how he can furnish his tables at pleasure ? Is he now grown careless, or we faithless ? Why do we not repose upon his mercy ? Rather than we shall want, when we trust him, he will fetch quails from all the coasts of heaven to our board. O Lord, thy hand is not shortened in giving : let not ours be shortened or shut in receiving.

God will be waited on, and will give the consummation of his blessings in his own time. In

the evening of our life, sometimes, we have the first pledges of his favour : but to the morning of our resurrection must we look for our perfect participation of the true manna, the bread of life.

ROCK OF REPHIDIM.

BEFORE, Israel thirsted and was satisfied : after that, they hungered and were filled ; now they thirst again. They have bread and meat, but want drink : it is a wonder, if God do not always hold us short of something, because he would keep us still in exercise. We should forget at whose cost we live, if we wanted nothing. Still God observes a vicissitude of evil and of good ; and the same evils that we have passed return upon us in their courses. Crosses are not of the nature of those diseases, which they say a man can never have but once. Their first seizure does but make way for their re-entry. None but our last enemy comes once for all ; and scarcely can we thus speak of that enemy ; for even in living we die daily. We ought so to take leave of all afflictions, as to reserve a lodging for them, and to expect their return.

All Israel murmured when they wanted bread, meat, water ; and yet all Israel departed from the

wilderness of Sin to Rephidim at God's command. The very worst of men will obey God in something ; none but the good in all things : he is rarely desperate, that makes a universal opposition to God. It is an unsound praise that is given for one good action. If we follow God, and murmur, it is all one as if we had stayed behind.

Those distrust the providence of God in their necessity, who are ready to follow his guidance in their welfare. It is a harder matter to endure in extreme want, than to obey a hard commandment. Sufferings are greater trials than actions : how many have we seen hazard their lives with cheerful resolutions, who cannot endure in cold blood to lose a limb with patience !

It is not for necessity that we fare ill, but God has so appointed : it were all one with God to give us health as sickness, abundance as poverty. The treasure of his riches has greater store, than his creature can be capable of receiving ; we should not complain if it were not good for us to want.

There can be no more forcible motive to patience, than the acknowledgment of a divine hand that strikes us. It is fearful to be in the hand of an adversary ; but who would not have confidence in a father ? Yet, in our frail humanity, choler may transport a man from the remembrance of nature ; but when we feel ourselves under the

discipline of a wise God, who can temper our afflictions to our strength, to our benefit ; who would not rather murmur at himself, that he should swerve towards impatience ?

The opposition which is made to the instruments of God, redounds ever to his person. He holds himself smitten through the sides of his ministers.

Infidelity is crafty, and yet foolish ; crafty in her insinuations, foolish in her conceits.

Either God must humour carnal minds, or be distrusted : if they prosper, though it be with wickedness, God is with them ; if they be thwarted in their own designs, directly they ask, *Is God with us ?* To distrust and murmur was the way to put God from them. If he had not been with them, they had not lived. If he had been in them, they had not mutinied. They can think him absent in their want, and cannot see him absent in their sin : and yet wickedness, not affliction, argues him gone ; yea, then is he most present, when he most chastises.

It is the best way to trust God with his own causes ; when men will be intermeddling with his affairs, they undo themselves in vain. We shall find difficulties in all great enterprises : if we be sure that we have began them in obedience to God, we may securely cast all events upon him.

providence, which knows how to dispose, and how to end them.

Life is justly dear to all ; especially to him whom publick trust has made necessary. Mere fear is not sinful ; it is impotence and distrust, that accompany it, which make it evil. How well is that fear exercised, that leads us the more importunately to God.

Nothing more raises up the heart in present affiance, than the recognition of past favours or wonders. Behold, the same rod, that brought plagues to the Egyptians, brings deliverance to Israel. By the same means, God can save and destroy ; as the same sword defends and kills.

Twice has the rock yielded them refreshing water, to signify, that the true spiritual rock yields it always. The rock that followed them was Christ. O Saviour, cut of thy side issued that bloody stream, whereby the thirst of all believers is comfortably quenched : let us but thirst, not with repining, but with faith ; this rock shall abundantly flow forth to our souls, and follow us, till this water shall be changed into that new wine, which we shall drink with thee in thy Father's kingdom.

THE HAND OF MOSES LIFTED UP.

GOD knows how to make the fittest choice of the times of evil ; and withholds that one while, which he sends another, not without a just reason why he sends, and why he withholds it : and though to us evils always come, as we think, unseasonably, and at some times more unfitly than at others ; yet he who sends them knows their opportunities.

To be sick, and to die in the strength of youth, in the minority of children, to be pinched with poverty, or miscarriage of children in our age, how harshly unseasonable it seems ! But the infinite wisdom that orders our events, knows how to order our times. Unless we will be shameless unbelievers, O Lord, we must trust thee with ourselves and our seasons, and know, that not that which we desire, but that which thou hast appointed, is the fittest time for our sufferings.

Then only can we pray with hope, when we have done our best. And though the means cannot effect that which we desire, yet God will have us use the likeliest means in our power to effect it. Where it comes immediately from the charge of God, any means are effectual ; one stick of wood shall fetch water out of the rock, another shall extract bitterness from the water : but in those

projects, which we make for our own purposes, we must choose those helps, which promise most efficacy.

In vain shall Moses be upon the hill, if Joshua be not in the valley. Prayer without means is a mockery of God.

Nothing can more strengthen our faith, than the view of the monuments of God's favour.

This flesh of ours is not a good servant, unless it help us in the best offices. The God of spirits does most respect the soul of our devotion; yet it is both unmannerly and irreligious to have uncouth gestures in our prayers. The careless and uncomely carriage of the body helps both to signify and make a profane soul.

O the wondrous power of the prayers of faith! All heavenly favours are derived to us from this channel of grace: to these we are beholden for our peace, preservations and all the rich mercies of God, which we enjoy. We should not be in want, if we could properly ask.

A fathless man may as well hold still his hands and tongue; he may babble, but prays not; he prays ineffectually, and receives not; only the prayer of the righteous avails much; and only the believer is righteous.

There can be no merit, no recompense answerable to a good man's prayer; for heaven and

the ear of God are open to him : but the formal devotions of an ignorant and faithless man are not worth the crust of bread which he asks : yea, it is presumption in himself ; how shall it be beneficial to others ? It profanes the name of God, instead of adoring it. But how justly is the fervency of the prayer added to the righteousness of the person ? When the hand of Moses slackened, Amelek prevailed. No Moses can have his hand ever up. It is a title proper to God, that his hands are stretched out still ; whether to mercy or vengeance. Our infirmity will not suffer any intention, either of body or mind. Long prayers can hardly maintain their vigour. The strongest hand will languish with long extending : and when devotion tires, it is seen in the success ; then straight our Amelek prevails. Spiritual wickednesses are mastered by vehement prayers ; and by heartlessness in prayer they overcome us. Even in our prayers God will allow us to respect our own infirmities. In cases of our necessity, he regards not the posture of body, but the affections of the soul.

There cannot be a more brotherly office, than to help one another in our prayers, and to excite our mutual devotions. No christian may think it enough to pray alone ; he is no true Israelite, that will not be ready to lift up the weary hands of God's saints.

OF THE LAW.

ABOUT seven weeks have elapsed, since Israel came out of Egypt : in which space God had cherished their faith by five several wonders : yet now he thinks it time to give them statutes from heaven, as well as bread. The manna and the water from the rock, which rock was Christ in the gospel, were given before the law. The sacraments of grace, before the legal covenant. The grace of God prevents our obedience ; therefore should we keep the law of God, because we have a Saviour. O the mercy of our God ! which, before we see what we are bound to do, shews us our remedy, if we do it not. How can our faith disannul the law, when it was before it ? It may help to fulfil that which shall be : it cannot frustrate that which was not. The letters which God had written in the fleshly tables of men's hearts, were now, as those that were carved in some barks, almost grown out ; he saw it time to write them in dead tables, whose hardness should not be capable of alteration : he knew that the stone would be more faithful than our hearts.

O marvellous accordance between the two testaments ! In the very time of their delivery, there is the same agreement which is in the substance. In this view, the ancient Jews kept our

feasts, and we still keep theirs. The feast of the passover is the time of Christ's resurrection : then did he pass from under the bondage of death. Christ is our passover, the spotless Lamb, whereof not a bone must be broken. The very day on which God came down in fire and thunder to deliver the law ; even the same day came also the Holy Ghost down upon the disciples in fiery tongues for the propagation of the gospel. *That* was in fire and smoke ; obscurity was mingled with terror : *this* was in fire without smoke, befitting the light and clearness of the gospel : fire, not in flashes, but in tongues ; not to terrify, but to instruct. The promulgation of the law makes way for the law of the gospel. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

God might have imposed upon them a law by force ; they were his creatures, and he could require nothing but justice. It had been but equal had they been compelled to obey their Maker ; but God, who loves to do all things sweetly, gives the law of justice in mercy, and will not imperiously command, but craves our assent to that, which it were rebellion not to do.

How gentle should be the proceeding of fellow creatures, who have an equality of being, with an inequality of condition ; when their infinite Maker requests, when he might restrain ! God will make no covenant with the unwilling ; how much

less the covenant of grace, which stands all upon love ? If we wait till God offer violence to us against our will, we shall die strangers to him. The church is the spouse of Christ ; he will have her love by a willing contract, not by compulsion. The obstinate have nothing to do with God ; the title of all true converts is, a willing people.

When our souls are at the best, our approach to God requires particular addresses.

As sin is always dangerous, so most, when we bring it into God's sight : it poisons both our persons and services, and turns our good into evil. As therefore we must be always holy ; so most, when we present ourselves to the holy eyes of our Creator. We wash our hands every day ; but when we are to sit with some great person, we scour them with balls. And if we must be sanctified only to receive the law, how holy must we be to receive the grace promised in the gospel ?

It is fit that our reverence for God's presence should appear in our very garments ; that both without and within we may be cleanly ; but little would neatness of vestures avail us with a filthy soul.

The God of spirits looks to the inner man, and challenges the purity of that part which resembles himself :—*Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purge your hearts, ye double-minded.*

OF THE VAIL OF MOSES.

THE second tables are kept reverently in the ark, when the first lay broken in shivers upon Sinai ; like as the repaired image of God in our regeneration which is preserved, perfected, and laid up at last safe in heaven ; whereas the first image of our created innocence is quite defaced : so the second temple had the glory of Christ's exhibition, though meaner in frame. The merciful respects of God are not tied to glorious outsides ; or the inward worthiness of things to persons : he hath chosen the weak and simple, to confound the wise and mighty.

Yet God performed this work by Moses ; Moses hewed, and God wrote. Our true Moses repairs that law of God, which man had broken ; he revives it for us, and it is accepted of God, no less than if the first characters of it had been still entire. We can give nothing but the table ; it is God who must write in it. Our hearts are but bare tablets, till God by his finger engrave his law in them ; yea, Lord, we are a rough quarry ; hew thou us, and square us fit for thee to write upon.

I see Moses the receiver of the law, Elias the restorer of the law, Christ the fulfiller of the old law, and author of the new, all fasting forty days : and these three great fasters I find together glo-

rious on mount Tabor. Abstinence merits not ; for religion consists not in being either full or empty. What are meats or drinks to the kingdom of God, which is like himself, spiritual ? But fasting prepares best for good duties. Hence extraordinary prayer ever takes fasting to attend it, and so much the rather speeds in heaven, when it is so accompanied. It is good so to diet the body that the soul may be fattened.

The more familiar acquaintance we have with God, the more do we partake of him. He who passes by the fire, may have some gleams of heat ; but he who stands by it has his colour changed. It is not possible that a man should have any long conference with God, and be no wise affected. We are strangers from God, it is no wonder if our faces be earthly : but he who sets himself apart to God, shall find a kind of majesty and awful respect put upon him in the minds of others.

How did the heart of Moses shine with illumination, when his face was thus lightsome ! and if the flesh of Moses, in this base composition, so shined by conversing with God forty days in Sinai ; what shall our glory be, when clothed with incorruptible bodies, we shall converse with him in the highest heavens ?

Now his face only shone : afterwards the three disciples saw all his body shining. The na-

ture of a glorified body, the clearer vision, the immediate presence of that fountain of glory, challenge a far greater resplendence of glory to our faces than to his at Sinai. O God, we are content that our faces should be blemished awhile with contempt, and watered with tears ; how can we but shine with Moses, when we shall see thee more than Moses !

The brightness of Moses' face reflected not upon his own eyes ; he shone bright, and knew not of it : he saw God's face glorious ; but did not think others had so seen his. How many have excellent graces, and perceive them not ! Our own sense is an ill judge of God's favours to us ; those that stand by can convince us of that, which we deny to ourselves. Here below it is enough if we can shine in the eyes of others ; above, we shall shine and know it.

It is good for a man sometimes to hide his graces ; some talents are best improved by being laid up : Moses had more glory by his vail, than by his face. Christian modesty teaches a wise man not to expose himself to the fairest shew, and to live at the utmost pitch of his strength.

There is many a rich stone laid up in the bowels of the earth ; many a fair pearl laid up in the bosom of the sea, that never was seen, and never shall be. There is many a goodly star,

which because of height comes not within our account. How did our true Moses, with the veil of his flesh, hide the glory of his divinity, and put on vileness, besides the laying aside of majesty ; and shut up his great and divine miracles with—*see you tell no man!* How far are those spirits from this, which care only to be seen ; and wish only to dazzle the eyes of others with admiration, not caring for unknown riches ? but those yet more, who desire to seem above themselves, whether in parts or graces, whose veil is fairer than their skin. Modest faces shall shine through their vails, when the vain glorious shall bewray their shame through their covering.

OF NADAB AND ABIHU.

GOD, as he is himself eternal, so he loves permanence and consistency of goodness in us. If we be but momentary in our religion, and soon fall away, God regards us not. All promises are to perseverance. Surely it is but elementary fire that goes out ; that which is celestial continues. It was but some presumptuous heat in us, that decays upon every occasion.

But he who miraculously sent down this fire at first, will not renew the miracle every day by a little supply : it began immediately from God, it

must be nourished by means. Fuel must maintain that fire which came from heaven. God will not work miracles every day. If he have kindled in us, we may not expect he will every day begin again: We have the fuel of the word and ordinances, prayers and meditations, which must keep it in forever. It is from God that these helps can nourish his graces in us; like as every flame of our material fire has a concourse of Providence; but we may not expect new infusions: rather know, that God expects of us an improvement of those habitual graces we have received.

When we bring zeal without knowledge, misconceptions of faith, carnal affections, the devices of our evil worship, and superstitious devotions into God's service, we bring common fire to his altar; these flames were never of *his kindling*; he hates altar, fire, priest, and sacrifice.

If the sons of infidels live godlessly, they do their kind; their punishment shall be, though just, yet less: but if the children of religious parents, after all christian nurture, shall shame their education; God takes it more heinously, and punishes it more sharply. The more bonds of duty, the more plagues of neglect.

There is no voice louder in the ears of God, than a speechless repining of the soul. Heat is more intense by keeping it in; but Aaron's silence

was no less inward : he knew how little he should get by contending with God. If he breathed out discontent, he saw God could speak fire to him again : and therefore he quietly submitted to the will of God ; and because the Lord had done it, he held his peace. There is no greater proof of holiness, than to smart patiently ; and humbly and contentedly to rest the heart in the justice and wisdom of God's proceeding ; and to be so far from chiding, that we dispute not. If God either chide or smite, we may not answer again. When God's hand is on our neck, our hand must be on our mouth ; else, as mothers do their children, God will punish us so much the more for crying.

Never parent can have juster cause of mourning, than to see his sons dead in their sin ; if prepared and penitent, yet who can but sorrow for their end ? But to part with children to the danger of a second death, is worthy of more than tears. Yet Aaron must so learn to deny nature, that he must more magnify the justice of God, than lament the judgment. Those whom God has called to his immediate service, must know, that he will not allow them the common passions and cares of others. Nothing is more natural than sorrow for the death of our own : if ever grief be seasonable, it becomes a funeral. And if Nadab

and Abihu had died in their beds, this favour had been allowed them, the sorrow of their father and brethren: for when God forbids solemn mourning to his priests over the dead, he excepts the cases of this nearness of blood. Now all Israel may mourn for these two; only the father and brethren may not. God is jealous lest their sorrow should seem to countenance the sin which he had punished: even the fearfullest acts of God must be applauded by the heaviest hearts of the faithful.

Nothing is either more pleasing to God, or more suitable for men, than that his judgments should be seen and admired.

OF AARON AND MIRIAM.

RATHER than we should want, *a man's enemies shall be those of his own house.* Authority will meet with opposition, if it be never so mildly exercised. *To do well, and hear ill, is princely.*

The less a man strives for himself, the more is God his champion. It is the honour of great persons, to undertake the patronage of their client, : how much more will God avenge his elect, which cry to him day and night? He who said, *I seek not mine own glory,* adds, *but there is one that seeks it and judges.* God takes his part ever who fights not for himself.

The remunerations of the Almighty are infinitely gracious. He cannot want honour and patronage, who seeks the honour of his Maker. The ready way to true glory is goodness.

The withdrawing of God's presence is the presence of his anger. While he stays to reprove, there is favour in his displeasure : but when he leaves either man or church, there is no hope but of vengeance. The final absence of God is hell itself. When he forsakes us, though for a time, it is an introduction to his utmost judgment. The universal antidote, for all the judgments of God, is humble repentance.

God either denies, or defers the grant of our requests for our good ; it were wide for us, if our suits should be ever heard. It was fit that Miriam should continue some while leprous. There is no policy in a sudden removal of just punishment : unless the rain so fall that it lie and soak into the earth, it profits nothing. If the judgments of God should be only as passengers, and not sojourners at least, they could be no wise regarded.

OF THE SEARCHERS OF CANAAN.

IT is an unworthy thing to plead hardness of achieving, where the benefit will more than re-quite the endeavour. Our land of promise is

above ; we know the fruit thereof is sweet and glorious, the passage difficult. The giantly sons of Anak, the powers of darkness, stand in our way. If we sit down and complain, we shall once know that, *without shall be the fearful.*

See the idle pleas of distrust ; *we are not able ; they are stronger.* Could not God enable them ? was he not stronger than their giants ? Had he not promised to displace the Canaanites, and to settle them in their stead ? How much easier is it for us to spy their weakness, than for them to espy the strength of their adversaries ? When we measure our spiritual success by our own power, we are vanquished before we fight. He who would overcome, must neither look upon his own arm, nor the arm of his enemy ; but the mouth and hand of him who hath promised, and can perform. Who are we, flesh and blood, with our breath in our nostrils, that we should fight with principalities, powers, spiritual wickednesses in heavenly places ?

Distrust makes our dangers greater, and our helps less than they are, and forebodes ever worse than they shall be ; and if evils be possible, it makes them certain.

True christian fortitude teaches us not to regard the number or quality of the opponents, but the equity of the cause ; and dares to stand alone,

and challenge all comers : and if it could be opposed by as many worlds, as men, it may be overborne, but it cannot be daunted : whereas popularity carries weak minds, and teaches them the safety of erring with the multitude.

We have never so much need to be importuned, as in those things, whose benefit should make us most importunate. The sweetness of God's law and our promised glory are such as should draw all hearts after them ; and yet if we did not sue to men, as for life, that they would be reconciled to God, and be saved, I doubt whether they would obey ; yea, it were well, if our suit were sufficient to prevail.

OF CORAH'S CONSPIRACY.

THERE is no assurance of a man for one act : whom one sin cannot fasten upon, another may. Yea, the same sin may find a repulse one while from the same hand, which another time gives it entertainment : and that yielding loses the thanks of all the former resistance. It is no praise to have done once well, unless we continue.

If all civil honour flow from the king, how much more from the God of kings ? His hand exalts the poor, and casts down the mighty from

their throne. The man that will be lifting up himself, in the pride of his heart, from under the foot of God, is justly trodden in the dust.

I would never desire a better proof of a false teacher, than flattery. True meaning has no need to uphold itself by soothing. There is nothing easier than to persuade men to think well of themselves. When a man's self-love meets with another's flattery, it is high praise indeed that will not be believed.

There can be no greater revenge, than the imprecation of the righteous; there can be no greater punishment, than God's rejection of their services. With us men, what more argues dislike the person, than the turning back of his present? What will God accept from us, if not prayers?

The society of wicked men, especially in their sins, is mortally dangerous: while we will not be parted, how can we complain, if we be enwrapped in their condemnation? We sin by being in company with them, why should we not smart with them also?

It is a dangerous thing to usurp sacred functions. The ministry will not grace the man; the man may disgrace the ministry.

OF AARON'S CENSER AND ROD.

BY how much more faithful and pious we are towards God, so much earlier do we discern his judgments ; as those who are well acquainted with men, know by their looks and gestures that which strangers understand by their actions ; as finer tempers are more sensible of the changes of the weather. Hence the seers of God have ever from their watch-tower descried the judgments of God afar off.

It is not for God's ministers to stand upon their own perils in the common causes of the church : their prayers must oppose the judgments of the Almighty ; when the fire of God's anger is kindled, their censers must smoke with fire from the altar. Every christian must pray for the removal of vengeance ; how much more they whom God has appointed to mediate for his people ? Every man's mouth is his own, but they are the mouths of all.

When we come with supplications in our hands, we need not fear the strokes of God. We have leave to resist the divine judgments by our prayers, with favour and success. So soon as the incense of Aaron ascended up unto God, he accepted the offering ; he will rather spare the offenders, than strike the intercessor. How hardly

can any people miscarry, who have faithful ministers to sue for their safety : nothing but the incense of hearty prayers can cleanse the air from the plagues of God.

If Aaron's sacrifice were thus accepted, how much more shall the High Priest of the New Testament, by interposing himself to the wrath of his Father, deliver the offenders from death ? The plague was entered upon all the sons of men : but the blessed Saviour stood between the living and the dead, that all who believe in him might not perish. Aaron offered, and was not stricken ; but our Redeemer was stricken while he offered, that by his stripes we might be healed. Christ stood between the dead and the living, yea, he was both alive and dead ; and all this that we, who were dead, might live forever.

There is nothing more material, than that people should be assured, that their spiritual guides have their commission from God. The want of this persuasion is a prejudice to our success. It should not be so : but the corruption of men will not receive good, but from due messengers.

It is fit that God should make choice of his own attendants. Men hold it injurious to have servants obtruded upon them. Never shall that man have comfort in his ministry, whom God has not chosen. The great Commander of the world

has set every man in his station ; to one he has said, stand thou in this tower and watch ; to another, make thou good these trenches ; to a third, dig thou in this mine. He who gives and knows our abilities can best set us on work.

Fruitfulness is the best argument of the calling of God. Not only all the plants of his setting, but the very boughs, cut off from the body of them, will flourish. And that there may not want a succession of increase, here are fruit, blossoms, buds ; both proof and hope inseparably mixed.

That servant of God is ready to faint, who holds it not a sufficient encouragement to see the evident proofs of his master's favours.

God knows how to humble the stoutest heart, and can extort glory to his own name from the most obstinate gainsayers.

OF THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

HE who will pass to the promised land, must neither stand upon length of way, nor difficulty. Every way has its inconveniencies ; the nearest has more danger, the farthest has more pain ; either, or both, must be overcome, if ever we will enter the rest of God.

Impatience is the cousin to phrensy ; this causes men not to take care upon whom they run, so they may breathe out some revenge. How often have we heard men, who have been displeased with others, profane the name of their Maker ? He who will judge, and is able to confound, is fetched into the quarrel without cause. But if to strive with a mighty man be unwise and unsafe, what shall it be to strive with the mighty God ?

How sweet and delightful is the gospel ! Not only the fathers of the Old Testament, but the angels desired to look into the glorious mysteries of it ; and yet we are cloyed. This supernatural food is too light : the bread corn of our human reason and profound discourse would better content us.

God has a hand of providence in the annoyance and hurt of the basest creature ; how much less can the sting of an ill tongue, or the malice of an evil spirit strike us without him ?

While we are at war with God, we need not look for peace with his creatures : every thing seems to rejoice to execute the vengeance of his Maker. The stones of the field will not be in league with us, while we are not in league with him.

The ill wishes of our impatience are many times heard. As those good things are not grant-

ed, which we pray for without care ; so those evils, which we pray for and would not have, are often granted. The ears of the Lord are not only open to the prayers of faith, but to the impreca-
tions of infidelity. It is dangerous wishing evil to ourselves or others ; it is just in God to take us at our word, and to effect that which our lips speak against our heart.

The anger is so much the more, by how much less it is noticed. When God is not heard before he is felt, it is a fearful sign of displeasure. It is with God, as with us men, that still revenges are most dangerous. Till now all was well enough with Israel, and yet they grudged : those that will complain without a cause, shall have cause to complain for something. Discontented humours seldom escape unpunished, but receive that most justly, whereat they repined unjustly.

Now the people are glad to seek to Moses unbidden. Ever heretofore they had been wont to be sued to, and entreated for without their entreaty ; now their misery makes them importunate. There needs no solicitor where there is sense of smart. It were pity men should want affliction, since it sends them to their prayers and confessions. All the persuasions of Moses could not do that which the serpents have done for him. O God, thou seest how necessary it is we

should be stung sometimes, else we should run wild, and never come to a sound humiliation; we should seldom seek thee, if thy hand did not find us out.

In this troublesome wilderness, we are all stung by that fiery and old serpent: to the Saviour we must look to be healed.

OF BALAAM.

WICKED men never care to observe God's judgments, till themselves be touched. The fire of a neighbour's house would not so affect us, if it were not with the danger of our own. Secure minds never startle till God come to their very senses.

If either strength or policy would prevail against God's church, it could not stand. And why should not we be as industrious to promote the glory of God, and bend both our hands and heads to the causes of the Almighty? When all helps fail Moab, the magician is sought to. It is a sign of a desperate cause, to make satan either our counsellor or refuge.

I have ever seen, that God loves to take occasion of proceeding with us from ourselves, rather than from his own immediate prescience. Hence

it is, that we lay open our wants, and confess our sins to him, who knows both better than our own hearts, because he will deal with us from our own mouths.

The hand of God is in the restraint of many evils, which we never knew to be towards us. The Israelites sat still in their tents, and little thought what mischief was brewing against them: without ever informing them, God crosses the designs of their enemies. He that keeps Israel is both a sure and a secret friend.

O that we could be so importunate for our good, as wicked men are for the compassing of their own designs ! A denial does but whet the desires of vehement suitors. Why are we faint in spiritual things, when we are not denied, but only delayed ?

Depraved nature thinks it impossible to condemn honour and wealth ; and because too many fools are thus taken, cannot believe that any would escape. But let sensual hearts know, there are those who can despise the world, and say, *Thy gold and silver perish with thee* : And that in comparison of a good conscience, can tread under foot his best proffers, like shadows, as they are ; and that can do as Balaam said.

One prohibition is enough for a good man. While the delay of God does but hold us in sus-

pense, importunity is holy and seasonable ; but when once he gives a resolute denial, it is bold impiety to solicit him. When we ask what we are bidden, our suits are not more vehement than welcome ; but when we beg prohibited favours, our presumption is troublesome and abominable : no good heart will endure to be twice forbidden.

God permits some things in his indignation ; not that he gives leave to the act, but he gives a man over to his sin in the act : this sufferance implies not favour, but judgment.

Covetous men need neither clock nor bell to awaken them ; their desires make them restless. O that we could with as much eagerness seek the true riches, which only can make us happy.

Our inward disposition is the life of our actions ; according to that does the God of spirits judge us, while men censure according to our external motions.

It is one of the worthy employments of good angels, to make secret opposition to evil designs. Many a wicked act have they hindered, without the knowledge of the agent. It is all one with the Almighty to work by spirits and men ; it is therefore our glory to be thus set on work. To stop the course of evil, either by dissuasion or violence, is an angelick service.

It is not so much glory to God to take away wicked men, as to use their evil deeds to promote his own holy purposes. How soon could the Commander of heaven and earth rid the world of bad members ? But so should he lose the praise of working good by evil instruments.

The revenging angel stands before us ; and though we know we shall as surely die, as sin, yet how many have not wit or grace to give back ! though it be with the heart of the fool to save the body, with the pains of the body to save the soul.

How oft do we wish those things, the not obtaining of which is mercy ? We grudge to be stayed in the way to death, and fly upon those who oppose our perdition.

We little think it, but God will call us to account for unkind and cruel usage of his poor mute creatures. He has made us lords, not tyrants ; owners, not tormentors. He has given us leave to kill them for our use, not to abuse them at our pleasure : they are so our drudges, that they are our fellows by creation. It was a sign the magician would easily wish to strike Israel with a curse, when he wished for a sword to strike his harmless beast. It is ill falling into those hands, which beasts find unmerciful.

O the honour that has been formerly done by heathens, to them who have borne but the face of

prophets ! It fills me with shame and grief to compare the times and men : only, O God, be thou merciful to the despisers of thy faithful servants.

It has ever been seen, that the false worshippers of God have made more pompous show, and fairer flourishes of their piety and religion, than the true.

O man, who shall prescribe to God what instruments to use : he knows how to employ, not only saints and angels, but wicked men, beasts, devils, to his own glory.

What a notable proclamation had the infidels wanted of God's favour to his people, if Balaam's tongue had not been used ? How many shall once say, *Lord, we have prophesied in thy name,* who shall hear, *Verily, I know you not.*

OF THE DEATH OF MOSES.

THIS earth is made only for action, not for fruition. The services of God's children would be ill rewarded, if they must stay always in this world. Let no man think much, that they are called away, who are faithful to God ; they would not be changed, if it were not to their preferment. It is our folly that we would have good men live

forever. He who lends them to the world, is disposed to do them more good, than this earth can give. It were injurious to wish, that goodness should hinder any man from glory. So is the death of saints precious, that it is certain.

It is the goodness of God, that he will not have his children die any where, but where they may see the land of promise before them ; neither can they depart without much comfort, to have seen it. On the contrary, a wicked man, who sees ruin before him, may depend on more horror in the end of death, than in the way.

It is neither harsh nor new to God's children, to hear or think of their departure ; to them death has lost his horror, through acquaintance ; as those faces, which at first sight seemed ill-favoured, by oft viewing, become agreeable : they have so often thought and resolved on the necessity and issue of their dissolution, that they cannot hold it either strange or unwelcome : he who has had such entire conversation with God, cannot fear to go to him. Those who know him not, or know that he will not know them, no marvel if they tremble.

Expectation of any event is a great advantage to a wise heart. If the fiery chariot had caught up Elias unlooked for, we should have doubted of the favour of his transportation. It is a token of

judgment, to come as a thief in the night. God forewarns one by sickness, another by age, another by his secret influence, to prepare for their end : if our hearts be not now in readiness, we are worthy to be surprised.

How many noble proofs had Moses given of his courage and strength of faith ? How many faithful services had he done to his Master ? Yet, for one act of distrust, he must be gathered to his fathers, without entering the promised land. All our acts of obedience cannot bear out one sin against God. How vainly shall we hope to make amends to God for our former trespasses, by our better behaviour, when Moses has this sin laid against him, after so many and worthy testimonies of his fidelity ? When we have forgotten our sins, God remembers them ; and although not in anger, yet he calls for arrearages. If Moses must prematurely die the first death for one fault, how shall they escape the second death for sinning always ? Even where God loves, he will not wink at sin ; and if he do not punish, yet he will chastise : how much less can it stand with eternal justice, to let wilful sinners escape judgment ?

It is a dangerous thing in divine matters to go beyond our warrant. Those sins which seem trivial to men, are heinous in the sight of God. Any thing that savours of infidelity, displeases

God more, than some other crimes against the laws of morality.

The same God, who by the hands of angels carried up the soul of Moses to glory, doth also by the hands of angels carry his body down into the valley of Moab, to his sepulchre. Those hands which had taken the law from him, those eyes that had seen his presence, those lips that had conferred so often with him, that face that did so shine with the beams of his glory, may not be neglected, when the soul is gone. He who took charge of his birth and prservation in the reeds, takes charge of his exit out of the world. The care of God ceases not over his own, either in death, or after it. How justly do we take care of the decent burials of our friends, when God himself gives us this example !

If the ministry of man had been used in this grave of Moses, the place might have been known to the Israelites ; but God purposely conceals this treasure, both from men and devils ; that so he might both cross their curiosity, and prevent their superstition. If God had loved the adoration of the relicks of his servants, he could never have had a fitter opportunity for this devotion, than in the body of Moses. It is folly to place religion in those things which God hides on purpose from us ; it is

not the disposition of the Almighty to restrain us from good.

Yet that divine hand, which locked up this treasure, and kept the key of it, brought it forth afterwards glorious. In the transfiguration, this body, which was hid in the valley of Moab, appeared on the hill of Tabor ; that we may know, these bodies of ours will not be lost, but laid up : and shall as surely be raised in glory, as laid down in corruption. We know, that when he shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory.

OF RAHAB.

HEAVEN is promised to us, but not to our carelessness, infidelity, disobedience. He who has set this blessed inheritance before us, presupposes our wisdom, faith, holiness.

He that would be happy in this spiritual warfare must know where the strength of his enemy lies, and must frame his guard according to the other's assault. It is a great advantage to a christian, to know the fashion of the adversary's onsets, that he may the more easily compose himself to resist. Many a soul has miscarried through ignorance of his enemy, which had not perished, if he had well known, that the weakness of satan stands in our faith.

The mercy of God does not measure us by what we were ; it would be wide with the best of us, if the eye of God should look backward to our former state : there he would see Abraham an idolater, Paul a persecutor, Manasses a necromancer, Mary Magdalene a courtezan, and the best vile enough to be ashamed of himself. Who can ever despair of mercy, that sees even Rahab brought into the blood of Israel and line of Christ ?

The parents and brethren of Rahab take their rest : they are not troubled with the fear and care of the success of Israel, but securely go with the current of the present condition. She watches for them all, and breaks her midnight sleep to prevent their last. One wise and faithful person does well in a house ; where all are careless, there is no comfort, but in perishing together. It had been an ill nature in Rahab, if she had been content to be saved alone. That her love might be equal to her faith, she covenants for all her family ; and so returns life to those of whom she received it. But the bond of nature and of grace will draw all ours to the participation of the same good with ourselves.

If we will wander out of the limits which God has set us, we cast ourselves out of his protection ; we cannot challenge the benefit of his gracious preservation, and our most precious redemption,

when we turn aside into the by-ways of our own hearts ; not for innocence, but for safety. The church is like that house of Rahab, which is saved when all Jericho perishes. While we keep ourselves within her lists, we cannot miscarry through misopinion ; but when once we forsake the church, let us look for judgment from God, and error in our own judgment.

OF JORDAN DIVIDED.

EITHER success or discomfiture presages the event. As a man raises up his own heart before his fall, and depresses it before his glory ; so God raises it up before his exaltation, and casts it down before his ruin. It is not otherwise in our spiritual conflicts ; if our great adversary see us once faint, he gives himself the day. There is no way to safety, but in having our hearts the last to yield. That which the heathens attributed to fortune, we may justly ascribe to the hand of God ; that he speeds those that are forward. All the ground that we lose is given to our adversaries.

Delays, whether in the business of God or of ourselves, are hateful and prejudicial. Many a one loses the land of promise by lingering ; if we neglect God's time, it is just in him to cross and disappoint us in our time.

It appears to be the will of God to temper our desires, and so to allay our joys, that their fruition hurt us not. He knows that, as it is in meats, long abstinence exposes to a surfeit, when we come to a feast ; so it fares in the contentments of the mind : therefore he feeds us not with the dish, but with the spoon : and will have us neither cloyed nor famished. If the mercy of God have brought us within sight of heaven, let us be content to pause a while, and upon the banks of Jordan fit ourselves for our entrance.

It were as easy for God to work miracles always ; but he knows, that custom were the way to make no miracles. God's ways are extraordinary only till he have brought us into the road, and then he refers us to his ordinary proceedings.

Who can wish for a better guide, than the God of heaven, in his word and sacraments ? Who can know the way into the land of promise so well as he who owns it ? And what means can better direct us thither, than those of his institution ?

How fearful shall their estate be, who come with unhallowed hearts and hands to the word of the gospel, and the true manna of the evangelical sacrament ? As we used to say of the court and of fire, so we may say of these divine institutions, we freeze if we be far off from them ; and if we

be more near than befits us, we burn. Under the law we might look at Christ aloof; now under the gospel we may come near him: he calls us to him, and holds communion with us.

What can be so comfortable to a good heart, as to see the pledges of God's presence and favour? To hear the loving kindness of God is pleasant; but to behold and feel the evidences of his mercy, is unspeakably delectable. Hence the saints of God, not contenting themselves with faith, have still prayed for sight and fruition, and mourned when they have been denied. What a happy prospect has God set before us, of Jesus Christ crucified for us, and offered unto us!

There is a holiness required to make us either patients or beholders of the great works of God: how much more, when we should be actors in his secret services? There is more use of sanctification, when we must present something to God, than when he must do ought to us.

The same faith that led Peter upon the water, must carry the bearers of the ark into it. There can be no christian without belief in God, and also in Christ; but those who are near to God in his immediate services, must go before us no less in believing, than they do as example.

“What ailed thee, O sea, that thou fleddest, and thou, Jordan, that thou wert driven back?

Ye mountains, that ye leaped like rams, and ye little hills like lambs ? The earth trembled at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob." How observant are all the creatures to the God who made them ! How glorious a God do we serve ! whom all the powers of the heavens and the elements obey, and readily take that nature, which he pleases to give them.

He who made the wilderness comfortable, will make Jordan dry ; he will overcome all difficulties for us ; and those things, which we most feared, will he make most sovereign and beneficial to us. O God, as we have trusted thee with the beginning, so will we trust thee with the finishing of our glory. Faithful art thou who hast promised, who wilt also do it.

OF ACHAN.

GOD has provided for our weakness in the paucity of his commands : but our immorality stands not so much in having few precepts, as in keeping those we have. So much more guilty are we in the breach of one, as we are favoured in the number.

A lewd man is a pernicious creature : that he ruins his own soul, is the least part of his mis-

chief ; he commonly draws judgments upon a thousand, either by the desert of his sin, or by the infection.

After the law has brought us under the conduct of the true Jesus, our sins are more rare, and our lives are more consonable. While we are under the law, we do not so keep it, as when we are delivered from it. Our christian freedom is more holy than our servitude. Then have the sacraments of God their due effect, when their receipt purges us from our old sins, and makes our conversation clear and spiritual.

Good success lifts up the heart with too much confidence ; and while it dissuades men from doing their best, oft times disappoints them. With God, the means can never be too weak ; without him, never strong enough.

It is to no purpose to pray against punishment, while the sin continues ; and though God loves to be sued to, yet he holds our requests unseasonable, till there be care had of satisfaction. When we have risen, and redressed sin, then may we fall down for pardon.

When we are crossed in just and holy quarrels, we may well think there is some secret sin unrepented of, which God would punish in us ; which though we see not, yet he hates, that he will rather be wanting to his own cause, than not

revenge it. When we go about any enterprize of God, it is good to see that our hearts be clear from any pollution of sin ; and when we are thwarted in our hopes, it is our best course to ransack ourselves, and to search for some sin, hid from us in our bosom, but open to the view of God.

Foolish men think to run away with their private sins, and say, tush ! no eye shall see me : but when they think themselves safest, God pulls them out with shame. The man who has escaped justice, and now is lying down in death, would think, my shame shall never be disclosed : but before men and angels shall he be brought on the scaffold, and find confusion as certain as late.

Softness of address is a great help towards the good effect of an admonition. Roughness and rigour, many times, harden those hearts, which meekness would have melted to repentance. Whether we sue, or convince, or reprove, little good is gotten by bitterness.

Detestation of the sin may well stand with favour to the person : and these two not distinguished, cause great wrong either in our charity or justice ; for, either we uncharitably hate the creature of God, or unjustly affect the evil of men.

The confession of our sins does no less honour God, than his glory is blemished by their commission. Who would not be glad to redeem the honour of his Redeemer with his own shame ?

God will once wring from the conscience of wicked men their own indictment : they have not more carefully hid their sin, than they shall one day freely proclaim their own shame.

Achan's confession, though it were late, yet was it free and full : for he not only acknowledges the act, but the ground of his sin ; *I saw, and coveted, and took.* The eye betrayed the heart ; and that the hand ; and now all conspire in the offence. If we choose not to flatter ourselves, this has been the order of our crimes.

Evil is uniform ; and beginning at the senses, takes the inmost fort of the soul, and then arms our own outward forces against us. This shall once be the lascivious man's song, *I saw, and coveted, and took* : this the thief's : this the idolator's ; this the glutton's and drunkard's : all these receive their death by the eye.

The overprizing and overdesiring of these earthly things, carries us into all mischief, and hides from us the sight of God's judgments. Whosoever desires the *glory* of metals, or of gay clothes, or honours, cannot be innocent.

How dangerous it is, to suffer sin to lie fretting into the soul ! which, if it were washed oft betimes with our repentance, could not kill us. In moral offences, the course of human justice is not stayed by our repentance. It is well for our souls

that we have repented ; but the laws of men take not notice of our sorrow. I know not whether the death, or the tears of a malefactor, be a better sight. The censures of the church are wiped off by weeping ; not the penalties of laws.

EHUD AND EGLON.

GOD has bidden us cleanse our hearts of all our corruptions ; yet he will permit some of these thorns still in our sides, for exercise, for humiliation. If we could lay violent hands upon our sins, our souls should have peace ; now our indulgence costs us many stripes and many tears. What a continued circle is here of sins, judgments, repentance, deliverances !

The justice of the Almighty can least brook evil in his own : the same heathen, which provoked Israel to sin, shall scourge them for sinning. Our very profession hurts us if we be not innocent.

The very purpose of affliction is to make us importunate. He who hears the secret murmurs of our grief, yet will not seem to hear us, till our cries be loud and strong. God sees it best to let the penitent dwell for a time under their sorrows ; he sees us sinking all the while, yet he lets us alone, till we be at the bottom : and when once

we can say, *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee*, instantly follows, *the Lord heard me*. A vehement suitor cannot but be heard of God, whatsoever he asks. If our prayers want success, they want heart ; their blessing is according to their vigour. We live in bondage to those spiritual Moabites, our own corruptions. It discontents us : but where are our strong cries unto the God of heaven ? Where are our tears ? If we could passionately bemoan ourselves to him, how soon should we be more than conquerors ? Some good motions we have to send up to him, but they faint in the way. We may *call* long enough, if we *cry* not to him.

In human things, it is good to look to the means ; in divine, to the worker. No means are to be contemned, that God will use ; no means to be trusted, that man will use without him.

Faith evermore overlooks the difficulties of the way, and bends her eyes only to the certainty of the end. In this intestine slaughter of our tyrannical corruptions, when we cast our eyes upon ourselves, we might well despair. Alas ! what can our left hands do against these spiritual wickednesses ? But when we see him, who has both commanded, and undertaken to prosper these holy designs, how can we doubt of success ? *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

Not only the vocal admonitions, but also the real judgments of God, are his errands to the world. He speaks to us in rain and waters, in sicknesses and famine, in unseasonable weather and inundations: these are the secondary messages of God; if we will not hear the first, we must hear these to our cost.

External ceremonies of piety, and compliments of devotion, may well be found with falsehood in religion. They are a good shadow of truth, where it is; but where it is not, they are the very body of hypocrisy.

GIDEON'S CALLING.

IT is a good sign when God chides us; his round reprehensions are ever gracious forerunners of mercy; whereas his silence at the wicked argues deep and secret displeasure.

The angels, who have ever God before them, and in their thoughts, have him also in their mouths: *The Lord is with thee.* But this, which appeared unto Gideon, was the angel of the covenant, the Lord of angels. While he was with Gideon, he might well say, *The Lord is with thee.*

Who can complain either of solitariness or of opposition, that has God with him? with him, not only as a witness, but as a party.

While he calls Gideon valiant, he makes him so. How could he be but valiant, that had God with him? The godless man may be careless, but cannot be other than cowardly. It pleases God to acknowledge his own graces in men, that he may interchange his own glory with their comfort; how much more should we confess the graces of one another? Let God have his own in the worst creature; yea, let the worst creature have that praise, which God would put upon it.

The main care of a good heart is still for the publick; neither can it enjoy itself, while the church of God is distressed. As faith draws home generalities, so charity diffuses generalities from itself to all.

Wheresoever God chastises, there he is, yea, there he is in mercy. Nothing more proves us his, than his stripes; he will not bestow correction where he does not love.

If God should not begin with us, we should be ever miserable; if he should not give us till we ask, yet who should give us to ask? He who commonly gives us power to crave, sometimes gives us without craving, that the benefit might be so much more welcome, by how much less it was expected; and we so much more thankful, as he is more forward. When he bids us ask, it is not because he needs to be entreated, but that he

may make us more capable of blessings by desiring them : and where he sees fervent desires, he waits not for words ; and he who gives ere we ask, how much more will he give when we ask ?

Humility is both a sign of following glory, and a way to it, and an occasion of it. Boasting and height of spirit will not avail with God. None have ever been raised by him, but those who have previously humbled themselves ; none have been confounded by him, who have been abased in themselves. Thereupon it is that he adds, *I will therefore be with thee* ; as if he had answered, hadst thou not been so poor in thyself, I would not have wrought by thee. How should God be magnified in his mercies, if we were not unworthy ? How should he be strong, if not in our weakness ?

Those who are rightly affected by the glad news of spiritual deliverance, study to shew their loving respects to the messengers.

Such pleasure does God take in the thankful endeavours of his servants, that he patiently waits upon the leisure of our performances.

It is most just with God, that judgment should continue with the sin ; and no less mercy, if it may remove after it. Wouldest thou fain be rid of judgment ? inquire what false altars and groves thou hast in thine heart. Down with them first.

GIDEON'S PREPARATION AND VICTORY.

HOW jealous God is of his honour? He is willing to give deliverance to Israel, but the praise of the deliverance he will keep to himself, and will shorten the means, that he may have the full measure of the glory. And if he will not allow lawful means to stand in the light of his honour, how will he endure it to be crossed so much as indirectly: it is less danger to steal any thing from God, than his glory. O God, what art thou the better for our praises? to whom, because thou art infinite, nothing can be added. It is for our good, that thou wouldest be magnified by us. O teach us to receive the benefit of thy merciful favours, and to return thee thanks.

Gideon's army must be lessened; and who are so fit to be cashiered as the fearful? God bids him therefore proclaim licence for all saint hearts to leave the field. An ill instrument may shame a good work: God will not glorify himself by cowards. As the timorous shall be without the gates of heaven, so shall they be without the lists of God's field. Although it was not their courage that should save Israel, yet without their courage, God would not serve himself of them. Christianity requires men; for if our spiritual difficulties meet not with these high spirits, instead of whetting our fortitude, they quell it.

Neither must we be strong and courageous only, but acquainted with our own resolutions, not out of any vain presumption, but out of a faithful reliance on the strength of God, in whom, when we are weak, then we are strong. O thou white liver ! does but a foul word, or a frown, secure thee from Christ ? does the loss of a little land, or silver, disquiet thee ? does but the sight of the Midianites in the valley strike thee ? home then, home to the world ; thou art not then for the conquering band of Christ. If thou canst not resolve to follow him through infamy, prisons, racks, gibbets, flames, depart to thine house, and save thy life to thy loss.

How many make a glorious shew in a warfaring church, who, when they shall see danger of persecution, will shrink from the standard of God ? Hope of safety, examples of neighbours, desire of praise, fear of censures, coercion of laws, fellowship of friends, draw many into the field : who, so soon as ever they see the adversary, repent of their conditions : and if they may fairly escape, will be gone early for Mount Gilead.

Very shame holds some in their station, whose hearts are already fled. And if we cannot endure that men should be witnesses of that fear, which we might live to correct, how shall we abide once to shew our heads before that awful Judge,

when he shall call us forth to the punishment of our fear ? O the vanity of foolish hypocrites ! that run upon the terrors of God, while they would avoid the shame of men.

The Lord of hosts will serve himself of none but able champions. If he have therefore singled us into his combat, this very choice argues, that he finds that strength in us, which we cannot confess in ourselves. How can it but comfort us in our great trials, that if the great Searcher of hearts did not find us fit, he would never honour us with so hard an employment ?

When God has stripped us of all our earthly confidence, then does he find time to give us victory ; and not till then, lest he should be a loser in our gain : like as at last he unclothes us of our body, that he may clothe us upon with glory.

To wait for God's performance in doing nothing, is to abuse that divine providence, which will so work, that it will not allow us to be idle.

Our flight gives advantage to the feeblest adversary ; whereas our resistance foils the greatest : how much more, if we once turn our backs upon a temptation, shall our spiritual enemies, which are ever strong, trample us in the dust ? Resist, and they shall flee : stand still, and we shall see the salvation of the Lord.

ABIMELECH'S USURPATION.

THOSE who are most unworthy of honour, are most ardent in chace of it; whilst the consciousness of better deserts bids men sit still, and wait to be either importuned or neglected. There can be no greater sign of unfitness, than vehement suit. It is hard to say, whether there be more pride, or ignorance, in ambition. I have noted this difference between spiritual and earthly honour, and the clients of both; we cannot be worthy of the one without earnest prosecution, nor with earnest prosecution worthy of the other: the violent obtain heaven; only the meek are worthy to inherit the earth.

Natural respects are the most dangerous corrupters of all elections. What hope can there be of worthy superiors in any free people, where nearness of blood carries it from fitness of disposition! Whilst they say, *He is our brother*, they are enemies to themselves, and Israel.

If a man have cast off his God, he will easily cast off his friends: when religion is once gone, humanity will not stay long after.

No man knows how to be sure of him who is unconscionable. He who has been unfaithful to one, knows the way to be perfidious, and is only fit for his trust who is worthy to be deceived;

whereas faithfulness, besides the present good, lays the ground of farther assurance. The friendship that is begun in evil cannot stand ; wickedness, both of its own nature, and through the curse of God, is ever unsteady ; whereas that affection, which is knit in God, is indissoluble.

OF JEPHTHA.

THAT God, who justly ties men to his laws, will not abide that we should tie him to our laws, or to his own : he can both rectify and ennable the blood of Jeptha. That no man should be too much discouraged by the errors of propagation, even the base son of man may be the adopted child of God : and though he be cast out from the inheritance of his brethren on earth, may be admitted to the kingdom of Israel.

The common gifts of God respect not the parentage or blood, but are indifferently scattered where he pleases to let them fall.

As we, so God also finds it seasonable, to tell his children of their faults, while he is whipping them. It is a safe and wise course, to make much of those in our peace, whom we must make use of in our extremity ; else it is but just, that we should be rejected by those whom we have rejected.

Can we look for any other answer from God than this? Did ye not drive me out of your houses, out of your hearts, in the time of your health and jollity? Did ye not plead the strictness of my charge, and the weight of my yoke? Did not your wilful sins expel me from your souls? What do you now crouching to me in the evil day? Surely, O God, it is but justice if thou be not found of those who were glad to lose thee. It is thy mercy, if, after many checks and delays, thou wilt be found at last. Where an act cannot be reversed, there is no amends but confession; and if God himself take up with this satisfaction, *he that confesses shall have mercy*; how much more should men hold themselves well paid with words of humility and deprecation?

This is the disposition of all good hearts, they look to their sword and bow, as servants, not patrons; and while they use them, trust in God. If we could do so in all our businesses, we should have both more joy in their success, and less discomfort in their miscarriage.

Vows are as they are made, like unto odours; if they be of ill composition, nothing offends more; if well tempered, nothing is more pleasant. Either certainty of evil, or uncertainty of good, or impossibility of performance, make vows no service to God. When we vow what we cannot, or

what we ought not to do, we mock God, instead of doing him honour. Our conscience will never find peace any way, but in that which we see before us, and which we know to be safe, both in the kind and the circumstances. There is no comfort in peradventure it may please God. What good child will not take part of the parent's joy? If Jeptha returns with trophies, it is no marvel if his daughter meet him with timbrels. O that we could be so affected with the glorious acts of our heavenly Father? O God, thou subduest thine enemies, and mightily deliverest thy people; a song of praise waits for thee in Zion.

It falls out often, that those times and occasions, which promise most contentment, prove most doleful in the issue. The heart of this virgin was never lifted up so high as now, neither did any day of her life seem so happy as this; and this only proves the day of her solemn and perpetual mourning: As contrarily, the times and events, which we have most distrusted, prove most beneficial. It is good in a fair morning, to think of that storm that may rise ere night, and to enjoy both good and evil with religious fear.

Miserable is that devotion that troubles us in the performance; nothing is more pleasant than the acts of true piety.

An unlawful vow is ill made, but worse performed. It were pity this constancy should light upon any, but a holy object. No loan can make a truer debt than our vow ; which if we pay not in our performance, God will pay us with judgment. We, who pretend to be christians, have all opened our mouths to God in that initial and solemn vow of christianity : O that we could not go back ! So much more is our vow obligatory, by how much the thing vowed is more necessary.

It is natural to us, to affect that perpetuity in our succession, which is denied us in our persons ; our very bodies would emulate the eternity of the soul. And if God have built any of us a house on earth, as well as prepared us a house in heaven, it must be confessed a favour worth our thankfulness : but as the perpetuity of our earthly houses is uncertain, let us not rest our hearts upon that, but make sure of the house which is eternal in the heavens.

SAMSON CONCEIVED.

OF extraordinary persons, the very birth and conception is extraordinary. God begins his wonders betimes in those whom he will make wonderful. There was never any one of these, who were miraculously conceived, whose lives were

not notable and singular. The presages of the womb and the cradle are commonly answered in the life. It is not the manner of God to cast away strange beginnings.

Afflictions have this advantage, that they occasion God to shew that mercy to us, of which the prosperous are incapable. It would not beseem a mother to be so indulgent to a healthy child, as to a sick.

O God, we are many times miserable, and feel it not ; thou knowest even those sorrows which we might have ; thou knowest what thou hast done ; do what thou wilt.

Comforts shall come unseasonably to that heart which is not apprehensive of his own sorrow. We must first know our evils ere we can quit them. It is the just method of every true angel of God, first to let us see that whereof either we do or should complain, and then to apply comforts : like as a good physician first pulls down the body, and then raises it with cordials. If we cannot abide to hear of our faults, we are not capable of amendment.

A holy austerity is imposed on those who are consecrated to the Lord. We borrow more names of our Saviour than one : as we are Christians, so we are Nazarites. The consecration of our God is upon our heads, and therefore our very

hairs should be holy. Our appetite must be curbed, our passions moderated and so estranged from the world, that in the loss of parents or children, nature may not make us forget the obligations of religion.

Nature pleads for liberty, religion for restraint. Quaffing and cramming is not the way to heaven : a drunken Nazarite is a monster amongst men. O that christians should ever quench the Spirit of God with a liquor of God's own making ! that they should suffer their hearts to be drowned in wine, and should so live, as if the practice of the gospel were quite contrary to the rule of the law.

Never wine made so strong a champion, as water did here. The power of nourishment is not in the creatures, but in their Maker.

Daniel and his three companions kept their complexion with the same diet wherewith Samson got his strength. He who gave that power to the grape, can give it to the stream. O God, how justly do we raise our eyes from our tables unto thee, who canst make water nourish and wine enfeeble us !

That wife has learned to make a true use of her head, who is ever ready to consult with him about the messages of God.

As a straight line is the shortest, the nearest way to any blessing is to go by heaven. As we

may not sue to God, and neglect means, so we must sue to God for those means which we shall use.

All good men have not equal measures of faith. The bodies of men have no more differences of stature than their graces. Credulity to men is faulty and dangerous ; but in the matters of God, is the greatest virtue of a christian. Happy are they who have not seen, and yet have believed. True faith takes all for granted, yea, for performed, which is once promised.

Never any man prayed for direction in the duties of God, and was repulsed : rather will God send an angel from heaven to instruct us, than our good desires shall be rendered vain.

How forward the good angels are to invite unto piety ! We can never feast the angels better, than with our hearty sacrifices to God. Why do not we learn this lesson of them, whom we propose to ourselves as patterns of our obedience ?

We shall be once like the angels in condition ; why are we not in the mean time like them in our disposition ? If we do not provoke and exhort one another to godliness, and do care more for a feast than a sacrifice, our appetite is not angelical, but brutish.

True piety is not uncivil, but while it magnifies the author of all blessings, is thankful to the

means. Secondary causes are worthy of regard ; neither need it detract any thing from the praise of the agent to honour the instrument. It is not only rudeness, but injustice in those, who can be content to hear good news from God with contempt of the bearers.

The reason was good and irrefragable, *If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering from us.* God will not accept gifts, where he intends punishment, and professes hatred. The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord. If we can find assurance of God's acceptation of our sacrifices, we may be sure he loves our persons. If I incline to wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear me ; but the Lord has heard me.

SAMSON'S MARRIAGE.

I WISH Manoah could speak so loud, that all our Israelites might hear him ; *Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all God's people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines ?* If religion be any other than a cypher, how dare we not regard it in our most important choice ? Is she a fair Philistine ? Why is not this deformity of the

soul more powerful to dissuade us, than the beauty of the face or of gold to allure us? To doat upon a fair skin, when we see a Philistine under it, is sensual.

It has ever been the manner of God, to exercise his champions with some initiatory encounters. Both Samson and David must first fight with lions, then with Philistines: and he whose type they bore, meets with that roaring lion of the wilderness, in the very threshold of his publick charge. The same hand that prepared a lion for Samson, has proportionable matches for every christian. God never gives strength, but he employs it. Poverty meets one like an armed man; infamy, like some furious mastiff, comes flying in the face of another: the wild boar out of the forest, or the bloody tyger of persecution sets upon one; the brawling curs of heretical pravity or contentious neighbourhood, are ready to bait another: and by all these meaner adversaries will God fit us for greater conflicts. It is a pledge of our future victory over our spiritual Philistines, if we can say, my soul has been among lions. Come forth now, thou weak christian, and behold this preparatory battle of Samson. Dost thou think God deals hardly with thee in matching thee so hard, and calling thee forth to so many combats? What dost thou but repine at thine own glory? How shouldst thou be victorious without resistance?

If that roaring lion, that goes about seeking whom he may devour, find us alone among the vineyards of the Philistines, where is our hope? not in our heels; he is swifter than we: not in our weapons; we are naturally unarmed: not in our hands, which are weak and languishing; but in the spirit of God, by whom we can do all things. If God fight in us, who can resist him? There is a stronger lion in us, than that against us.

The mercies of God are ill bestowed upon us, if we cannot step aside to view the monuments of his deliverances; dangers may be at once passed and forgotten. As Samson had not found his honeycomb, if he had not turned aside to see his lion; so we shall lose the comfort of divine interpositions, if we do not renew our perils by meditation.

Lest any thing should befall Samson, wherein is not some wonder, his lion doth more amaze him dead than alive; for lo, the carcase is made a bee-hive; and the bitterness of death is turned into the sweetness of honey. O the wonderful goodness of our God, that can change our terror into pleasure, and can make the greatest evil beneficial! Is any man, by his humiliation under the hand of God, grown more faithful and conscientiable? There is honey out of the lion. Is any man, by his temptation or fall, become more cir-

cumspect? There is also honey out of the lion. There is no Samson to whom every lion does not yield honey. Every christian is the better for his evils.

Good may not be refused, because the means are accidentally evil; honey is honey still, though in a dead lion. Those are less wise and more scrupulous than Samson, who abhor the graces of God, because they find them in ill vessels. One cares not for the preacher's true doctrine, because his life is evil; another will not take a good receipt from the hand of a physician, because he is given to unlawful studies; a third will not receive a deserved contribution from the hands of a usurer? It is a weak neglect not to take the honey, because we hate the lion. God's children have a right to their Father's blessings wheresoever they find them.

The courtesies of the world are hollow and thankless; neither does it ever propose so ill, as when it shews the fairest. None are so near to danger, as those whom it entertains with smiles; while it frowns, we know what to trust to; but its favours are worthy of nothing but fears and suspicions: open defiance is better than false love.

What assurance can there be of him who has a Philistine in his bosom? Adam, the perfectest man, Samson the strongest man, Solomon the

wisest man, were betrayed by the flattery of their helpers. As there is no comfort in life comparable to a faithful yoke-fellow, so wo be to him who is matched with a Philistine.

SAMSON'S VICTORY.

SLIGHT occasions may not break the knot of matrimonial love ; and if any just offence have slackened it on either part, it must be fastened again by speedy reconciliation.

That evil which the wicked feared, meets them in their flight. How many, through fear of poverty, seek to gain unjustly, and die beggars ? How many, to shun pain and danger, have yielded to evil, and in a long run, have been met in the teeth with that mischief, which they had hoped to escape ? How many, in a desire to avoid shame before men, have fallen into confusion before God ? Both good and evil are sure paymasters at the last.

That God, who can do nothing imperfectly, where he begins either mercy or judgment, will not leave till he have happily finished. As it is in his favours, so in his punishments, one stroke draws on another.

In the greatest strength there is use of patience. There was more fortitude in this suffering, than in his former actions. Samson abides to be tied by his own countrymen, that he may have the glory of freeing himself victoriously. Even so, O Saviour, our better Nazarite, thou, who couldst have called to thy Father, and have had twelve legions of angels for thy rescue, wouldest be bound voluntarily, that thou mightest triumph : so the holy martyrs were racked, and would not be loosed, because they expected a better resurrection. If we be not as well ready to suffer ill, as to do good, we are not fit for the consecration of God.

The spirit of the Lord came upon Samson : and then what are cords to the Almighty ? His new bonds are as flax burned with fire ; and he rouses up himself, like that young lion which he first encountered, and flies upon those cowardly adversaries ; who, if they had not seen his cords, durst not have seen his face. If they had been so many devils as men, they could not have stood before the spirit which lifted up the heart and hand of Samson. Wicked men never see fairer prospects, than when they are upon the threshold of destruction. Security and ruin are so close bordering upon each other, that, where we see the face of the one, we may be sure the other is at

his back. O God, if the means be weak, yet thou art strong : through God we shall perform great acts ; yea, *through Christ strengthening us we can do all things.* Seest thou a poor christian, who by weak counsel has obtained to overcome a temptation ? there is the Philistine vanquished with a sorry jaw-bone.

It is no marvel if he were thus admirable and victorious, whose bodily strength God meant to make a type of the spiritual power of Christ. And behold, as the three thousand of Judah stood still, gazing with their weapons in their hands, while Samson alone subdued the Philistines ; so did men and angels stand looking upon the glorious achievements of the Son of God, who might justly say, *I have trod the wine-press alone.*

SAMSON'S END.

IF a temptation have drawn us into sin, it is happy for us if we can repent ere we be surprised with judgment. Samson had not lost his strength by sinning ; neither had the Lord wholly forsaken him. Divine bounty leaves us rich of common graces, when we have mispent our better store ; like as our first parents, when they had spoiled themselves of the image of their Creator, yet were left wealthy of noble faculties of the soul.

A wide conscience will swallow any sin. Those who have once enthralled themselves to a known evil, can make no other difference of sins, than their own loss or advantage! A liar can steal; a thief can kill: a cruel man can be a traitor; a drunkard can falsify: wickedness once entertained can put on any shape. Trust him in nothing, who makes not conscience of every thing.

Nothing is so gross and unreasonable to a well disposed mind, which temptation will not represent fit and plausible. No man, by his own strength, can secure himself against that sin which he most detested.

If God withdraw his graces, when he is too much provoked, who can complain of his mercy? He who sleeps in sin must look to wake in loss and weakness.

God's merciful humiliations of his own are sometimes so severe, that they seem to differ little from desertions; yet at the worst, he loves us bleeding: and when we have smarted enough, we shall be sensible of it.

It is the quality of superstition to misinterpret all events, and to feed itself with the conceit of those favours, which are so far from being done, that their authors never were. Why do not we learn zeal of idolaters? and if they be so forward in acknowledgment of their deliverances to a false deity, how cheerfully should we ascribe ours to

the true ? O God, whatsoever be the means, thou art the author of all our success. O that man would praise the Lord for his goodness, and tell the wonders he hath done for the sons of men !

Knowing therefore that this play of the Philistines must end in his death, he collects all the forces of his soul and body, that his death may be a punishment instead of a sport. He addresses himself both to die and to kill. All the acts of Samson are for wonder, not for imitation.

MICHA'S IDOLATRY.

A CARNAL heart cannot forego that wherein it delights, without impatience ; cannot be impatient without curses : whereas the man that has learned to enjoy God and use the world, smiles at a shipwreck, and pities a thief, and cannot curse but pray.

Even evil actions have oft times good meanings, and those good meanings are answered with evil recompences. Many people bestow their cost, their labour, their blood, and receive punishment instead of thanks.

Many times the conscience runs away smoothly with an unwarrantable action, and rests itself upon those grounds, which afterwards it sees cause to

condemn. It is a sure way therefore to inform ourselves thoroughly ere we settle our choice, that we be not drawn to reverse our acts with late shame and unprofitable repentance.

Worldly minds are not very nice in their religious services : if they have a God, an ephod, a priest, it suffices them : they had rather enjoy a false worship with ease, than to take pains for the true. Those who are curious in their diet, in their purchases, in their attire, in their contracts, are yet very indifferent in the business that pertains to God.

Heresy and superstition have small beginnings, dangerous proceedings, pernicious conclusions. This contagion is like a canker, which at the first is scarcely visible, but afterwards it eats away the flesh, and consumes the body.

THE HAPPY MAN.

HE is a happy man, who has learned to read himself more than all books ; and has so taken out his lesson that he can never forget it : who knows the world, and calls not for it, but after many traverses of thought, discerns to what he may trust, and stands now equally armed for all events : who has got the mastery at home, so

that he can cross his without a mutiny, and so please it that makes it not a wanton : who in earthly things wishes no more than nature, but in spiritual is ever ambitious : who for his own condition, stands on his own feet, not needing to lean upon the great ; and can so frame his thoughts to his estate, that when he has least, he cannot want, because he is as free from desire as superfluity : who has seasonably broken the headstrong restlessness of prosperity, and can now manage it at pleasure : upon whom all smaller crosses light as hailstones upon a roof, and the greater calamities he can take as tributes of life and tokens of love ; and if his ship be tossed, yet he is sure his anchor is fast. If all the world were his, he could be no other than he is ; no whit gladder in himself, no whit higher in his carriage, because he knows contentment lies not in the things he possesses, but in the mind that values them. The powers of his resolution can either multiply or subtract at pleasure. He can make his cottage a manor or a palace when he lists, and his home-stead a large dominion ; his stained cloth, tapestry ; his earthen, plate. He can see state in the attendance of one servant, having learned that a man's greatness or baseness is in himself ; and in this he may even contest with the proud, that he thinks his own the best. Or, if he must be outwardly great, he can

but turn the other end of the glass, and make his stately manor a low and strait cottage ; and in all his costly furniture he can see not riches, but use : he can see dross in the best metal and earth through the best clothes, and in all his troop he can see himself his own servant. He lives quietly at home out of the noise of the world, and loves to enjoy himself always, and sometimes his friend, and has as full scope to his thoughts, as to his eyes. He ever walks even in the midway between hopes and fears, resolved to fear nothing but God, to hope for nothing but that which he must have. He has a wise and virtuous mind in a serviceable body, which that better part affects as a present servant and a future companion ; so cherishing his flesh, as one that would scorn to be all flesh. He has no enemies ; not that all love him, but because he knows to make a gain of malice. He is not so engaged to any earthly thing, that they two cannot part on even terms ; there is neither laughter in their meeting, nor tears at their parting. He keeps ever the best company, the God of spirits, and the spirits of that God, whom he entertains continually in an awful familiarity, not being hindered either with too much light, or with none at all. His conscience and his hand are friends, and whatsoever temptation assaults him, will not fall out. That divine part goes even

uprightly and freely, not stooping under the burden of a willing sin, not fettered with unnecessary or unjust scruples. He would not, if he could, run away from himself, or from God ; not caring from whom he lies hid, so he may look these two in the face. Censures and applauses are passengers to him, not guests ; his ear is their thorough-fare, not harbour ; he has learned to fetch both his counsel and his sentence from his own breast. He does not lay weight upon his own shoulders, as one that loves to torment himself with the honour of much employment ; but as he makes work his game, so he does not list to make himself work ; his strife is ever to redeem, not to spend time. It is his trade to do good ; and to think of it, his recreation. He has hands enow for himself and others, which are ever stretched forth for beneficence, not for need ; He walks cheerfully in the way that God has marked, and never wishes it more wide or more smooth. Those very temptations where he is foiled, strengthen him ; he comes forth crowned and triumphing out of the spiritual battles, and those scars that he has make him beautiful. His soul is every day dilated to receive that God in whom he is ; and he has attained to love himself for God, and God for his own sake. His eyes stick so fast in heaven, that no earthly object can remove them ; yea, his whole self is there before

his time, and sees with Stephen, and hears with Paul, and enjoys with Lazarus, the glory that he shall have ; and takes possession beforehand of his room amongst the saints : and these heavenly contentments have so taken him up, that now he looks down with displacency upon the earth, as the region of his sorrow and banishment ; yet joying more in hope, than troubled with the sense of evils, he holds it no great matter to live, and his greatest business to die ; and is so well acquainted with his last guest, that he fears no unkindness from him : neither makes he any other of dying, than of walking home when he is abroad, or of going to bed when he is weary of the day. He is provided for both worlds, and is sure of peace here, of glory hereafter ; and therefore has a light heart and a cheerful face. All his fellow-creatures rejoice to serve ; his betters, the angels, love to observe him ; God himself takes pleasure to converse with him ; and has sainted him before his death, and in his death crowned him.

